Richard Yates Annie Dillard Joseph Langland

ISSN 0029-2397 • SUMMER 1975 $1.50

THE North American Review

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v.260
No.2 Display

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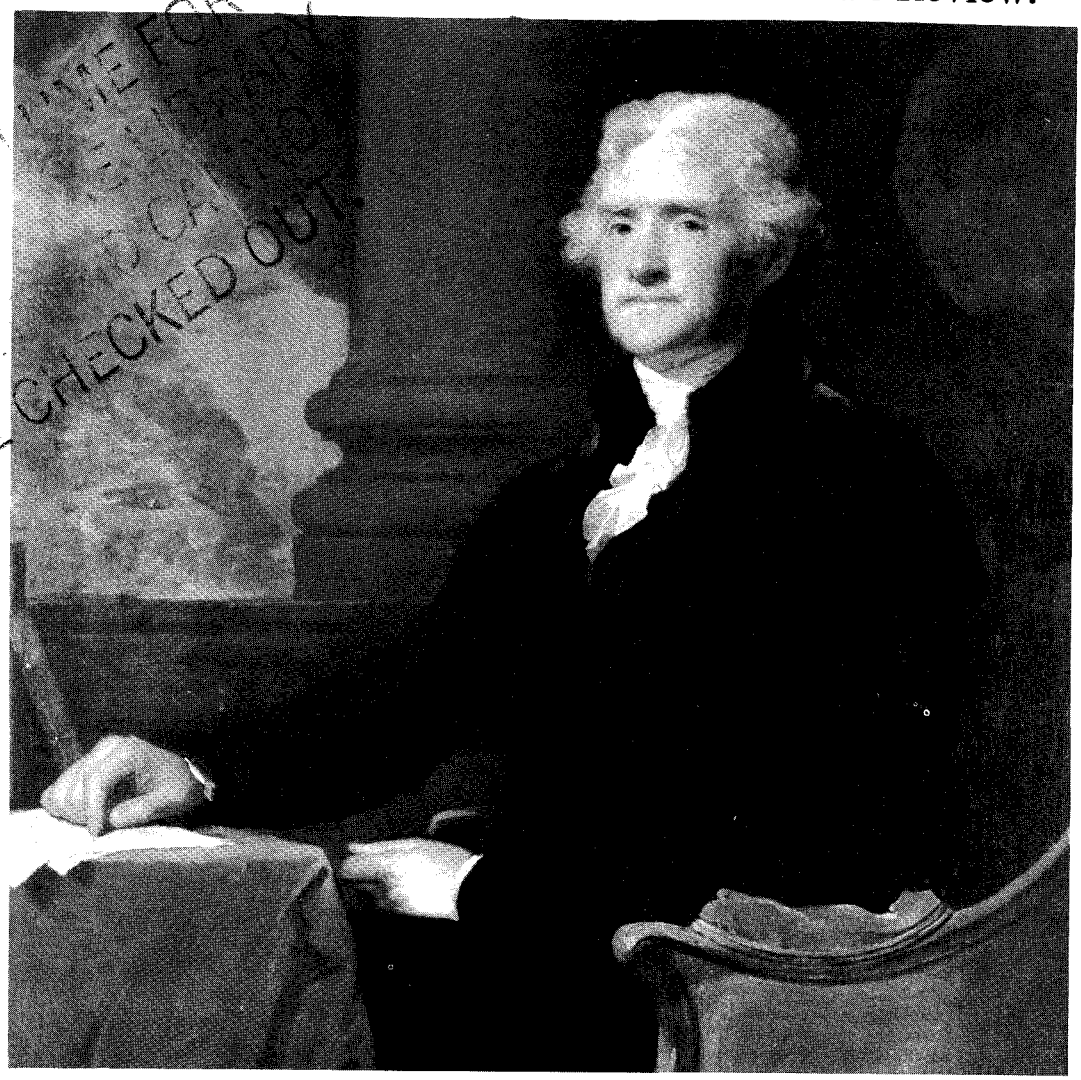
What Sort of Man Reads The North American Review?



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Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you. and this letter presented to Col. Bernard Peyton of Richmond (my correspdt) will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J

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Wild Should Wild Remain.

"Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in."

ALDO LEOPOLD

"Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man apart from that...."

ROBINSON JEFFERS

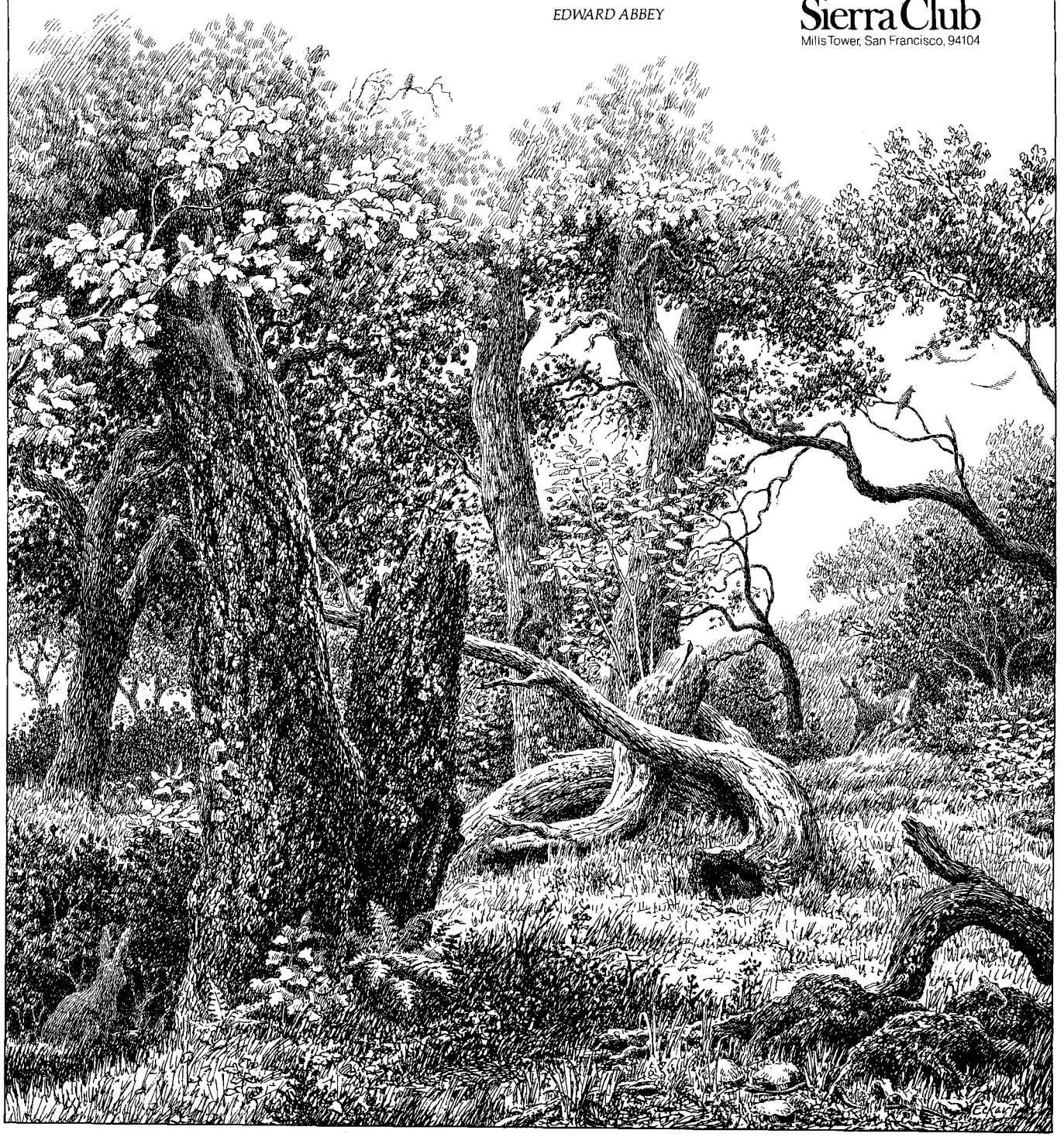
"The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, (the earth which bore us and sustains us), the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need—if only we had the eyes to see."

EDWARD ABBEY

"We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds... It is important to us... simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as an idea."

WALLACE STEGNER

Sierra Club
Mills Tower, San Francisco, 94104



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

It's a particular pleasure for us to revisit some poems which are among the most remarkable written by an American in the last 25 or 30 years. Joseph Langland's *The Wheel of Summer* appeared in 1963, has long been out of print, and contained 22 poems called "Sacrifice of. . . ." On pages 68-82, we offer a selection from the sacrifice poems, including a new one not in the 1963 volume, and a newly written introduction to the group. All the sacrifice poems, as well as two new "sacrifices" and the introduction, will appear later this year under our own imprint. We think of the Langland book as an experiment in quality, and we encourage our readers' interest in it.

The articles on pages 41 to 56, dealing with alternative means of higher education, lean heavily on the experimental Athabasca University in Edmonton, Alberta—in fact, all three authors are connected with that university—but the articles do not necessarily reflect the official opinions or attitudes of the Athabasca administration or governing boards. We thought it might be useful, having taken a long and hard look at some U.S. university matters a while back, to turn our attention northward.

Some bookish notes: A collection of short stories by Andre Dubus, *Separate Flights*, has been published by David R. Godine. Three of the stories, including the title work, first appeared here. . . . Illinois has just published *Literary Disruptions*, a critique of contemporary fiction by Jerome Klinkowitz, portions of which were first printed in the NAR. . . . And Illinois has also brought out two story collections, *Crossings*, by Stephen Minot, and *Such Waltzing Was Not Easy*, by Gordon Weaver, both containing fictions that appeared in this magazine. . . Later this year, Sheed & Ward will publish Barry Lopez' book treating the trickster figure in Indian legend, *Coyote Goes Along*, and Knopf is preparing a collection of stories by Gail Godwin, a frequent and valued contributor to the NAR.

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FOUNDED IN 1815
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Editorial and Business offices: UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA, CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
Rates: $1.50 A COPY; $6.00 A YEAR IN THE U.S. AND ITS POSSESSIONS, $6.15 IN CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA—ALL OTHER COUNTRIES $7.00 A YEAR

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, Summer 1975, Vol. 260, No. 2. Published quarterly in March, June, September, December, at the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Second Class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright © 1975 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed envelope with return postage. **THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW** is indexed in Social Sciences and Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Historical Abstracts, and the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature. Back file volumes are available from AMS Reprint Company, 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003, and from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U. S. and Canadian national newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 155 West 15th Street, New York, N. Y. 10011.

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Civia Cohen

Vietnam Sketchbook

"I left for Vietnam in mid-March without any expectation of seeing its end, as you well know from our conversation. I had some journalist friends living there who told me everything was relatively normal and the relaxed life was conducive to writing. While Thieu had already given up the highlands a few days before I arrived, all the seasoned observers advised me that the consequences of his move would not be felt for at least six, maybe eighteen months.

"At the time I arrived, no reliable bookmaker would have given long shot odds on the chances of a total offensive, and a few days later it was a shoo-in for a total communist take-over. Of course, I was caught in the middle of all this.

"Since I did not go there to cover a war, I have no intentions of giving you a 'war story.' I stuck to the original idea of diary sketches and reactions. The material covers the short span of 3½ weeks. There was no way I could do an objective piece . . . that whole place really got to me, and it is still hard to believe that it is all over." —*C. C.*

My fifth grade geography teacher made the best bulletin boards of any teacher in Rogers School. She spent hours drilling us while she worked with all her visual aids. Whenever I fly over Iowa and Nebraska and catch an air-view shot of the sectioned farmscapes, I immediately want to blurt out FOOD-GROWER OF THE NATION, GRANARY OF THE WORLD. So much for *tabula rasa*.

* * *

We pick up speed to land, skimming a triangle and square quilting of over-baked land. I am staring out the window looking for elephant grass. Even though we are coming in from the northeast, there might be a stray orphaned patch. It all must have disappeared with the highlands a few weeks ago.

Running in for a stop now, passing loden and khaki F-5s parked in barbed-wire pens along the runway. A perfect chorus line of tail-ends pointing toward us. Bundles of "life" rice waiting on the field in tarpaulin packaging. It's like dropping down in the middle of a CBS evening news report.

An hour past noon, Tan Son Nhut is empty. There are no swarming baggage caravans or busy little trucks. No overalled men stuffing the underbellies of fat jets. No hubbub of planes readying for take-off or landing. I was hoping for a beginner's reading of Vietnam. But too many *Time-Life* covers and newsreel clips force fixed frames on the place. I can hear the heat searing the concrete and burning charred spots on the aluminum siding of vacant hangars.

Our thin procession of passengers walks across the field. Nothing else interrupts the wide whiteness. Gravel explodes under our shoes, dusting us with thick chalk powder. In Hong Kong I was pushed for space. The openness is strange. I can chart all my senses clocking in their cues. When I was home I often went around nude, the clutter in each room absorbing my nakedness. Yet, taking the last shower in my cleared-out apartment, I had held my soiled clothes against my front, wishing I owned a terrycloth robe.

We kick worn bent nails and broken bits of wood. Next to the fence, a messy pile of rotted lumber sticks out in all directions and weeds scale up the roller-shaped bodies of military installations. A broken ladder is propped against the lean frame of a building. I remember rooms that are heavy with the remains of last-night's party and see Miss Haversham sitting in her wedding-dress brushed with cobwebs. A moat of broken cement runs along the front of the terminal and I straddle the sagging planks that bridge the tear.

I am standing in front of the Foreign Passport counter in a damp cellar must with my grip tightening around my daughter's arm while she pivots and twirls in a four-year-old's ballet. I am standing there testing the darkness and burrowing through the opaque air and I am looking at a small pressed-lipped man who is poking at the keys of an official typewriter with the end of a pencil. He sits perfectly straight and his head hits midway up the back of the chair. After every fourth punch of the keys, he jabs at his mouth with a long-ashed cigaret, never inhaling the smoke.

With my fingers firmly pressing my child's wrist, I begin moving through one of the lines. She cries and I loosen my hold knowing that it is not the reddening skin burns I am making on her arm, but her child sense that absorbs a parent's mood. Loitering beside a ragged travel poster of Hue's ancient attractions, three laughing policemen sip cans of Pepsi and pantomime quick draws of their hip-hung .45s. The wet heat seeps through my clothes and my daughter is tired. I whisper that there are no chairs, hoping she will not see the stiff bench that is too close to the open door of the pressed-lipped man's office. I edge against the woman standing ahead of me. After sitting across the aisle from her during the plane ride, after watching her nap and chew her lunch, there is a certain familiarity. A woman wearing a flowing long-sleeved *ao dai* stoops to place a thin graceful hand on each side of my child's round face. Her skin has a dry matted freshness. I can't hide the heat that shows in dirt lines on my face.

* * *

It is good to be outside and I move away from the afternoon shade of the building, easing in the sun-baked warmth. Lam comes toward us, waving in a walking run as he shouts back directions to the sleeping driver of an old car. The light catches in the clean smoothness of his white pants and he looks newly bathed. I was told that he always washes his feet every night before bed. He kisses my cheek and holds both my arms at the elbows telling me how happy he is to meet me and how difficult it was to get a car but he knew how to bargain for one at only 6,000 piasters. I wait in the car with my daughter on my lap while Lam savors a cigaret and tells the drive

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how to load my luggage. I only have three suitcases but he enjoys taking charge of things so I sit quietly while he instructs the driver where to place each bag. Lam works as interpreter and right-hand man for a correspondent friend of mine and I had sampled his *charge d'affaires* attitude when he called me collect in the states to give me bulletins on the weather and mood of Saigon.

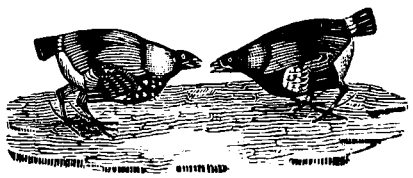
Lam sits next to me, his thin-boned features reminding me of a young Frank Sinatra, and we drive into the city past staggered pilings of scrapped tin and tar-paper squatters' huts while Lam tells me I will be queen of the city. Smells of cooking and crowdedness slide into the street. Dilapidated tent stalls border the highway and spill off the sidewalk. People squat eating in front of glass-cased vending stands and a half-naked baby toddles through curbside litter. Three older boys play in the rusted cab of an abandoned truck. People are hanging out of the cavities of half-stripped army barracks. We are moving through the flushing traffic between bicycles and noisy smoke-spitting motorcycles and battered cyclos pedaled by tired men with muscular legs.

Stopped at an intersection; a crowd is circling our car, pushing their arms through the open windows. A wide-eyed boy is playing a broken guitar and his younger brother leans into the car saying "You pay for nice song?" An old woman sticks out a leathery palm with calloused sores. I am sitting with my arm around the waist of my daughter's pink checked sunsuit while a woman with a wrinkled skeleton face holds out a sleepy infant with a distended belly and chicken legs. I am sitting there trying to think of things to give them since I don't have any Vietnamese coins while Lam waves away their pleading looks and rolls up the windowglass. We are driving into the city limits now, passing a watchful towering Coca-Cola sign, and Lam continues to apologize for the informality of his welcoming kiss.

* * *

It took the French six years to construct the granite base red-bricked Notre Dame Basilica. Coming in by sea along the river lined with mangroves, you could see the twin bell-towers from a distance. We swing around the place of the cathedral and come up Tu Do Street. There are only a few tamarind trees. The stucco buildings are greyed and pocked with pieces of bright colored poster-signs that refused to be washed away. A helmeted soldier in field fatigues stands on a corner triggering his M-16. Two small children catch handfuls of sand that trickles from the leak in a sandbagged gun emplacement. Lam is telling me what provinces are already lost and that NVA troops are moving toward the old capital of Hue and I am looking at a toothless man who is sitting on the sidewalk beside a small display of crudely sculpted animals peeling a banana.

The House of Deputies perched on Lam Son Square juts between the multi-windowed high rising Caravelle Hotel and the wide aging white-washed Continental Palace Hotel. If you turn your back on the wax and polish and gloved doorman at the Caravelle, you think you are in a quiet Mediterranean town. The Continental could have been lifted from the set of *Casablanca* with its red-tiled roof, sweeping archways, and ground floor terrace overlooking the "Continental Shelf" where Graham Greene's quiet American had a fateful encounter. A Corsican immigrant built the hotel, passing the legacy to his son



who is a kind of press aficionado mingling with the correspondent and writer clientele. During the last Tet offensive he ran through the streets shooting his own documentary.

We unload in front of the Continental and I side-step between the hanging bumpers of two yellow and blue baby Renault taxis parked on the curb. A young boy is peddling old paperbacks and he gently touches my arm to guide me to the horizontal stack that rests against a squat potted palm. He can't be any older than seven and he is missing his two bottom front teeth. He smiles his gap-toothed smile and charms me with his broken French. Such a pretty American needs a good book. I am reading the titles on the frayed drugstore jackets when a young girl pulls my sleeve, dangling a wreath of sweet-smelling jasmine. A hag-faced woman shakes her conical hat in a tambourine rattle. Two children want me to buy yesterday's *Saigon Post*. Pushing through the tangled outstretched arms, hurrying toward the hotel entrance while the woman follows rattling her hat and the children hug my side whispering please madame please madame. The seven-year-old is straightening his books and watching me with sad eyes. My daughter jumps on the carpeted stairs and I wait for the wrought-iron elevator and Lam tells me never to sit on the cane-back chairs in the lobby because I will get venereal disease.

* * *

It is a soothing dusk and the river air has a light fish smell. Sidewalk restauranters sell rice cakes and soda pop and young couples walk their children along the wharf while grandparents relax on lawn chairs. A sun-wrinkled man in an old baseball cap has a circus of colored balloons tied to the handlebar of his cyclo. Walking down Street of Flowers watching women shutter their stalls and empty water cans. In the darkness of a closed camera store, a family huddles cross-legged on the doorstoop lifting bites of dinner from a copper tray. The sidewalk is narrow and I step around them to walk in the street. A kneeling old woman washes blue porcelain bowls in a metal tub. The dirty dishwasher splashes off the curb running into the ruts of the street. She stares at me with dark eyes and a full chipmunk cheek, chewing her quid of betel while the juice rolls down her chin.

Black marketeers are folding their plastic display cloths and packing away their tubes of American toothpaste and boxes of Lady Scott tissues. There is a 10 p.m. curfew in Saigon. I am passing the gagging stench of an alleyway and I hold my breath. The street sellers scrub their sidewalk space with bamboo brushes every night, but men and children empty themselves on the street and in the night air Saigon smells like a sewer. A prostitute sits on the seat of her Honda nervously twisting the strap of her beaded purse. The police are already taking their posts and she only has a few more minutes.

I am sitting in my room with the ceiling fan blowing on me watching the gecko lizards run the width of the stucco wall. Hue was lost today and the roads are crowded with refugees fleeing to Da Nang. During lunch Mrs. Lien kept saying I was so young, so young. She carries all her money in a brown bag now, afraid she won't be able to get to her home when the time comes. The police are having scooter races in the empty street around Lam Son Square.

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Lam said not to go to the park because lepers sit on the swings and benches. I hold my daughter's hand, pulling her through the bicycles and motor scooters that are coming fast down Tu Do. It is odd to be in Saigon and be most afraid of rushing traffic. An afternoon drowsiness fills the city. The hotel porters nap on towels in the corridor. We are walking through an indoor arcade and it smells of dampness and urine mixed with mold. Steel accordions are pulled across the shop entrances and old men are sleeping contracted in the doorways.

The milk bar is open and I am waiting for a strawberry cone, trying to ignore the woman who is nuzzling against me. A dirty muslin headcloth frames her face in a bandage and a muddy infant is strapped to her back. She drops her claw hand palm up on the ledge. I cover my daughter, burying her between the counter and my own body. The 500 piasters are wetting in my closed fingers and I shove them at the woman and push away without looking into her face. The clerk calls me and I tell my child there is no more ice cream. The dust of dying buildings eats through you to numbness. A veteran is propped against the wall and I hate him for showing the torn ugly flesh of his severed limb.

Enemy troops are in Da Nang and the North Vietnamese have pushed down the DMZ bisecting the southern republic. We are sitting in my room and no one is talking. My friend flew with the refugee lift from Da Nang to Cam Ranh Bay and a mother passed him her crying baby as the wild flood of people swept her away from the plane. A soldier tore an old woman from the stewardess's arms and climbed aboard the carrier. When a mountain hamlet is taken you think of flattened thatched huts and burning crops. But Da Nang is the second largest city and it is as impossible to imagine its fall as it is to picture Oakland toppling into San Francisco Bay. Two days ago the tennis courts were full. The night is hot and soft and I can hear a guard's low whistle stopping someone out after curfew. There is a map stretched across my desk like in an old war movie and I stare at it wondering where our troops will stop running. This morning a fourteen-year-old girl in sandals and shirtwaist dress staggered in front of the hotel. She fell into the open lobby knocking the back of her head on the patterned ceramic floor. A desk clerk blocked me with his shoulder and the taxi drivers continued their conversation. There is too much disease in Saigon and people are afraid of lepers and refugees from the abandoned territories.

* * *

No one seems to understand the speed and they sit in Givral's cafe trading stories. In one city, the officials fled and frightened people followed. A few days later the enemy captured the city. Someone from Dalat said that the radio tower was shot down so the South Vietnamese reported contact lost and the city overrun. There are bad jokes about the VC marching into towns with signs painted BANG. A journalist ad-libs a monologue about a NVA general so bewildered by his easy success that he orders his valet to claim a city that was reported captured days before. Everyone speculates about panic psychology and war correspondents without battles to report draw strategy games on paper napkins. When you are waiting you fill the time in odd ways.

* * *

The rooms in the Continental are filled. The journalists are back in Saigon buying scotch and American cigarets and the war is becoming a class reunion. Anyone who has ever covered Vietnam is returning to see the end, checking their old sources and catching up on what they missed. The owner of Ramuntcho's put on extra waiters and he parades around the table shaking hands like the old days and recommending the spaghetti. A hotel porter shuffles into my room passing out bath towels and tells me he is glad to see his old friends but he is afraid of why they are here.

Fat Bao is already waiting for me in his taxi and he opens the door when he sees us coming down the stairs. He is head cabman and he gets to the hotel early to keep his standing. Turning his small round head, he shows his gold tooth. Baby-san go school yes? The streets around the Cathedral are busy. Schoolgirls with flowing long hair and white *ao dais* are walking in two's. A woman wearing her conical hat is rhythmically sweeping the curb-gutter with a straw broom. We are turning on to Phan Dinh Phung, squeezing through the Hondas and old French Citroëns. In front of the Information Ministry an odd scattering of parked jeeps is slowing traffic. Three fatigue-dressed soldiers are poised behind wooden barriers blocking the road that cuts through the park. Bao is talking about his eight children. His wife wants more but he thinks he will get himself fixed.

My daughter calls it a camp school because her class colors at long tables in the open yard. In front of the playground-fence, vendors are selling peanuts and pinwheels. Soeur Raphael is standing at the gate telling parents the Ministry of Education closed the school. Bao drives back to the Continental and my daughter cries and wants to know if she can still keep her satchel. We are stopped on the corner of Cong Ly Street watching a convoy of troop trucks roll toward the palace.

* * *

It is mango season. By eight in the morning a sleepy warmth crawls into the room. Tiny orange paper flowers bounce on vines outside the French windows. The sticky air slides over my skin and clothes in a seal of film. Loud-speakers are blaring military marches through the downtown streets. The music has a strange Aryan strength and after three days the pounding is speeding my body. I am on the balcony watching the swelling morning traffic and I am waiting to see people running through the streets with their clothes on backwards. A pajama-clad woman trots to Central Market balancing full baskets from either end of a bamboo-yoke. Yesterday, Nguyen-Tu squeezed lemon in his iced tea and told me Saigon is Saigon. I want to know the name for the pole with two baskets. Naming seems important now.

Lam is washing his hands for the fifth time in the last hour. All morning he sat in an armchair eating bread and jam and reading *Newsweek*. Yesterday he was too tired to work and he sat at my desk taping 90 minutes of music from Radio Hanoi. Lam grinds on me like all the slow motion of this country which can't seem to wake itself up. Someone said people get the government they deserve. He is lathering his hands, rubbing each knuckle, and I am hitting the spacer on my typewriter waiting for the bell to ring and feeling guilty about disliking a man who told me he stopped eating dog meat when he found out dogs were man's best friend.

* * *

Three small boys are escorting me home from Central Market. They are trailing me past the low-hanging stalls, chasing away children selling plastic bags. One is carrying my three bananas and the other two are sharing the watermelon half. I am paying them 20p each and they are laughing at making such easy money. They crowd me protectively as we walk down Le Loi Street and they want to know if I am stopping at more stores. I don't want to buy anything to take out of Vietnam. It seems too

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much like grave-robbing and I refuse to be another westerner who leaves with a glazed ceramic elephant. In front of the fountain a man hands me a printed business card: I AM A REFUGEE FROM PLEIKU PLEASE HELP ME.

* * *

According to Vietnamese legend, nails and hair continue growing after death. Mrs. Lien says that the girls in her office have stopped wearing nailpolish and they are afraid the VC will cut off their nails.

* * *

Someone at the Israeli Embassy says Saigon is like eastern Europe in 1939. Immigration is no longer issuing exit visas and people are trying to buy passports from foreign embassies. One woman says she is keeping a bottle of poison next to her bed and she is making her children sleep with her. But the waiting seems worse than the fears. The calm frightens me most of all. There are more beggars in front of the hotel and more troops loitering on corners but there is a business as usual manner about the city. At Givral's people are talking of coups. One man feels things will happen at the end of this week when the U.S. rejects aid. Everything seems right for a military take-over because there is a build-up of marines in Vung Tau and of paratroopers around Saigon. We are waiting for a Vietnamese solution.

* * *

An Air Force Colonel returned some books saying he will not have time to read them now. A student tells me his brother shot himself when he was ordered not to fight at Hue. Everyone tells me I should leave but I keep making reservations and canceling them. I listen to Lam, who is sure he will be killed, and I feel guilty knowing I can get out.

* * *

I heard the planes and booming sounds and I am on the balcony watching people going to work. For some reason I didn't even think of grabbing my daughter and running for shelter in the corridor. The lethargy of Saigon must have worked its way through me. Lam rushes in saying someone dropped two bombs on the Palace and the loudspeakers are announcing a 24-hour curfew. Tu Do Street is a wall of people trying to get home. The Vietnamese are a pessimistic people who believe when earth returns to earth there is nothing. I have been here long enough to know that nothing is going to happen this morning.

In true American tradition there is never any room for the poor. Only those who can afford to are leaving, the rest are forced to stay behind. The thirteen refugees from Tay Ninh that were living in my friend's garage stole an old Ford wagon and went back home to take their chances. In the corridor, two Americans are talking about phases and codes and contingency plans for evacuation. One correspondent wants to find a crystal set so he can radio in his own helicopter if he is stranded.

It is early afternoon and Saigon is napping. The stores are shuttered and the old men are in their doorways. I try to call the Information Ministry but the operator says everyone will be back in two hours. This must be the only country in the world where the government takes a siesta while it is losing a war. I have no real reason for staying and I think I am going to leave tomorrow, before the sense of doom shows openly in the city. The character of the people has already been killed. Keeping the final deathwatch seems like a sick kind of voyeurism and I do have a responsibility for my daughter. □

How about a shot at the NAR?

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Barry Lopez

My Horse

It is curious that Indian warriors on the northern plains in the nineteenth century, who were almost entirely dependent on the horse for mobility and status, never gave their horses names. If you borrowed a man's horse and went off raiding for other horses, however, or if you lost your mount in battle and then jumped on mine and counted coup on an enemy—well, those horses would have to be shared with the man whose horse you borrowed, and that coup would be mine, not yours. Because even if I gave him no name, he was my horse.

If you were a Crow warrior and I a young Teton Sioux out after a warrior's identity and we came over a small hill somewhere in the Montana prairie and surprised each other, I could tell a lot about you by looking at your horse.

Your horse might have feathers tied in his mane, or in his tail, or a medicine bag tied around his neck. If I knew enough about the Crow, and had looked at you closely, I might make some sense of the decoration, even guess who you were if you were well-known. If you had painted your horse I could tell even more, because we both decorated our horses with signs that meant the same things. Your white handprints high on his flanks would tell me you had killed an enemy in a hand-to-hand fight. Small horizontal lines stacked on your horse's foreleg, or across his nose, would tell me how many times you had counted coup. Horse hoof marks on your horse's rump, or three-sided boxes, would tell me how many times you had stolen horses. If there was a bright red square on your horse's neck I would know you were leading a war party and that there were probably others out there in the coulees behind you.

You might be painted all over as blue as the sky and covered with white dots, with your horse painted the same way. Maybe hailstorms were your power—or if I chased you a hailstorm might come down and hide you. There might be lightning bolts on the horse's legs and flanks, and I would wonder if you had lightning power, or a slow horse. There might be white circles around your horse's eyes to help him see better.

Or you might be like Crazy Horse, with no decoration, no marks on your horse to tell me anything, only a small lightning bolt on your cheek, a piece of turquoise tied behind your ear.

You might have scalps dangling from your rein.

I could tell something about you by your horse. All this would come to me in a few seconds. I might decide this was my moment and shout my war cry—*Hoka hey!* Or I might decide you were like the grizzly bear: I would raise my weapon to you in salute and go my way, to see you again when I was older.

* * *

I do not own a horse. I am attached to a truck, however, and I have come to think of it in a similar way. It has no name; it never occurred to me to give it a name. It has little decoration; neither of us is partial to decoration. I have a piece of turquoise in the truck because I had heard once that some of the southwestern tribes tied a small piece of turquoise in a horse's hock to keep him from stumbling. I like the idea. I also hang sage in the truck when I go on a long trip. But inside, the truck doesn't look much different from others that look just like it on the outside. I like it that way. Because I like my privacy.

For two years in Wyoming I worked on a ranch wrangling horses. The horse I rode when I had to have a good horse was a quarter horse and his name was Coke High. The name came with him. At first I thought he'd been named for the soft drink. I'd known stranger names given to horses by whites. Years later I wondered if some deviate Wyoming cowboy wise to cocaine had not named him. Now I think he was probably named after a rancher, an historical figure of the region. I never asked the people who owned him for fear of spoiling the spirit of my inquiry.

We were running over a hundred horses on this ranch. They all had names. After a few weeks I knew all the horses and the names too. You had to. No one knew how to talk about the animals or put them in order or tell the wranglers what to do unless they were using the names—Princess, Big Red, Shoshone, Clay.

My truck is named Dodge. The name came with it. I don't know if it was named after the town or the verb or the man who invented it. I like it for a name. Perfectly anonymous, like Rex for a dog, or Old Paint. You can't tell anything with a name like that.

The truck is a van. I call it a truck because it's not a car and because "van" is a suburban sort of consumer word, like "oxford loafer", and I don't like the sound of it. On the outside it looks like any other Dodge Sportsman 300. It's a dirty tan color. There are a few body dents, but it's never been in a wreck. I tore the antenna off against a tree on a pinched mountain road. A boy in Midland, Texas, rocked one of my rear view mirrors off. A logging truck in Oregon squeeze-fired a piece of debris off the road and shattered my windshield. The oil pan and gas tank are pug-faced from high-centering on bad roads. (I remember a horse I rode for a while named Targhee whose hocks were scarred from tangles in barbed wire when he was a colt and who spooked a lot in high grass, but these were not like "dents." They were more like bad tires.)

I like to travel. I go mostly in the winter and mostly on two-lane roads. I've driven the truck from Key West to Vancouver, British Columbia, and from Yuma to Long Island over the past four years. I used to ride Coke High only about five miles every morning when we were rounding up horses. Hard miles of twisting and turning. About six hundred miles a year. Then I'd turn him out and ride another horse for the rest of the day. That's what was nice about having a remuda. You could do all you had to do and not take it all out on your best horse. Three car family.

My truck came with a lot of seats in it

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and I've never really known what to do with them. Sometimes I put the seats in and go somewhere with a lot of people, but most of the time I leave them out. I like riding around with that empty cavern of space behind my head. I know it's something with a history to it, that there's truth in it, because I always rode a horse the same way—with empty saddle bags. In case I found something. The possibility of finding something is half the reason for being on the road.

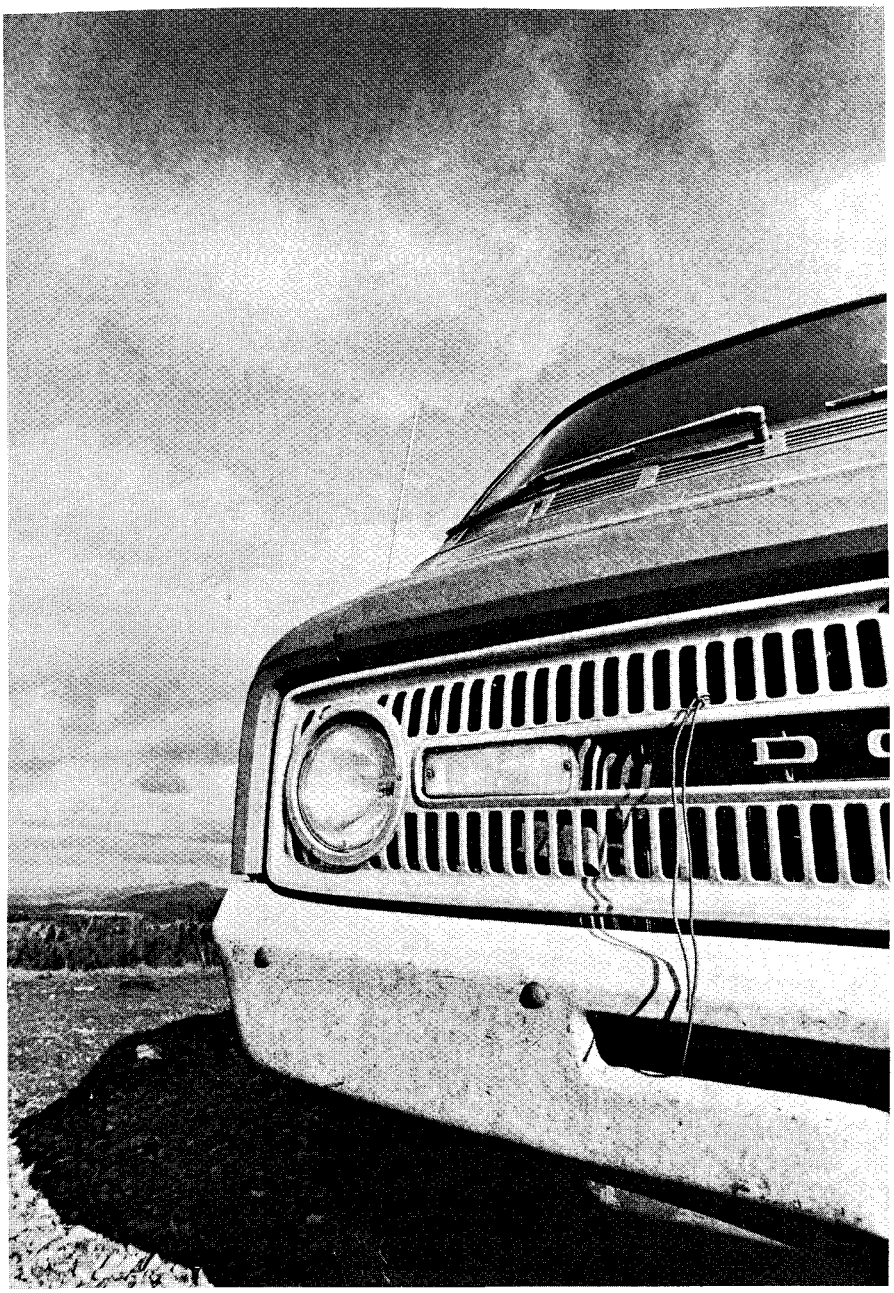
* * *

The value of anything comes to me in its use. If I am not using something it is of no value to me and I give it away. I wasn't always that way. I used to keep everything I owned—just in case. I feel good about the truck because it gets used. A lot. To haul hay and firewood and lumber and rocks and garbage and animals. Other people have used it to haul furniture and freezers and dirt and recycled newspapers. And to move from one house to another. When I lend it for things like that I don't look to get anything back but some gas (if we're going to be friends). But if you go way out in the country to a dump and pick up the things you can still find out there (once a load of cedar shingles we sold for $175 to an architect) I expect you to leave some of those things around my place when you come back—if I need them.

When I think back, maybe the nicest thing I ever put in that truck was timber wolves. It was a long night's drive from Oregon up into British Columbia. We were all very quiet about it; it was like moving clouds across the desert.

Sometimes something won't fit in the truck and I think about improving it—building a different door system, for example. I am forever going to add better gauges on the dash and a pair of driving lamps and a sunroof, but I never get around to doing any of it. I remember I wanted to improve Coke High once too, especially the way he bolted like a greyhound through patches of cottonwood on a river flat. But all I could do with him was to try to rein him out of it. Or hug his back.

Sometimes, road-stoned in a blur of country like southwestern Wyoming or North Dakota, I talk to the truck. It's like wandering on the high plains under a summer sun, on plains where, George Catlin wrote, you were "out of sight of land". I say what I am thinking out loud, or point at things along the road. It's a crazy, sun-stroked sort of activity, a sure sign it's time to pull over, to go for a walk, to make a fire and have some tea, to lie in the shade of the truck.



I've always wanted to pat the truck. It's basic to the relationship. But it never works.

I remember when I was on the ranch, just at sunrise, after I'd saddled Coke High, I'd be huddled down in my jacket smoking a cigarette and looking down into the valley, along the river where the other horses had spent the night. I'd turn to Coke and run my hand down his neck and slap-pat him on the shoulder to say I was coming up. It made a bond, an agreement we started the day with.

I've thought about that a lot with the truck, because we've gone out together at sunrise on so many mornings. I've even fumbled around trying to do it. But metal won't give.

The truck's personality is mostly an expression of two ideas: "with-you" and "alone". When Coke High was "with-you" he and I were the same animal. We could have cut a rooster out of a flock of chickens, we were so in tune. It's the same with the truck: rolling through Kentucky on a hilly two-lane road, three in the morning under a full moon and no traffic. Picture it. You roll like water.

There are other times when you are with each other but there's no connection at all. Coke got that way when he was bored and we'd fight each other about which way to go around a tree. When the truck gets like that—"alone"—it's because it feels its Detroit fat-ass design dragging at its heart and making a fool out of it.

* * *

I can think back over more than a hundred nights I've slept in the truck,

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"My mother is scrubbing floors so I can become a doctor. Now my school is running out of money."

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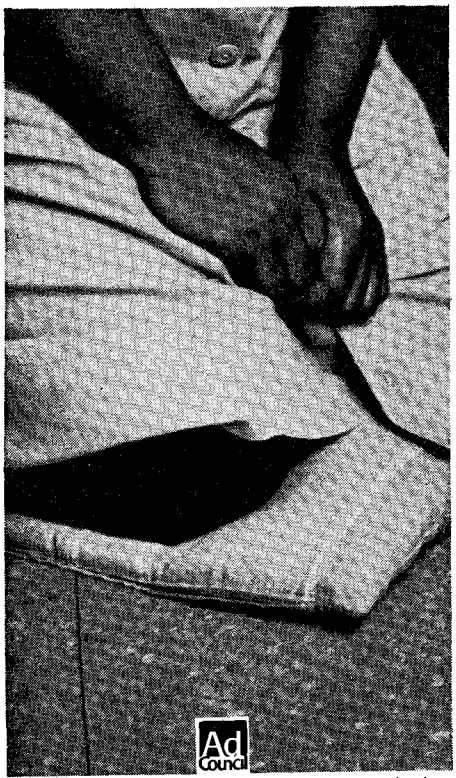

Photographed by Maureen Lambray

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sat in it with a lamp burning, bundled up in a parka, reading a book. It was always comfortable. A good place to wait out a storm. Like sleeping inside a buffalo.

The truck will go past 100,000 miles soon. I'll rebuild the engine and put a different transmission in it. I can tell from magazine advertisements that I'll never get another one like it. Because every year they take more of the heart out of them. One thing that makes a farmer or a rancher go sour is a truck that isn't worth a shit. The reason you see so many old pickups in ranch country is because these are the only ones with any heart. You can count on them. The weekend rancher runs around in a new pickup with too much engine and not enough transmission and with the wrong sort of tires because he can afford anything, even the worst. A lot of them have names for their pickups too.

My truck has broken down, in out of the way places at the worst of times. I've walked away and screamed the foulness out of my system and gotten the tools out. I had to fix a water pump in a blizzard in the Panamint Mountains in California once. It took all day with the Coleman stove burning under the engine block to keep my hands from freezing. We drifted into Beatty, Nevada, that night with it jury-rigged together with—I swear—baling wire, and we were melting snow as we went and pouring it in to compensate for the leaks.

There is a dent next to the door on the driver's side I put there one sweltering night in Miami. I had gone to the airport to meet my wife, whom I hadn't seen in a month. My hands were so swollen with poison ivy blisters I had to drive with my wrists. I had shut the door and was locking it when the window fell off its runners and slid down inside the door. I couldn't leave the truck unlocked because I had too much inside I didn't want to lose. So I just kicked the truck a blow in the side and went to work on the window. I hate to admit kicking the truck. It's like kicking a dog, which I've never done.

Coke High and I had an accident once. We hit a badger hole at a full gallop. I landed on my back and blacked out. When I came to, Coke High was about a hundred yards away. He stayed a hundred yards away for six miles, all the way back to the ranch.

* * *

I want to tell you about carrying those wolves, because it was a fine thing. There were ten of them. We had four in the truck with us in crates and six in a trailer. It was a five hundred mile trip. We went at night for the cool air and because there wouldn't be as much traffic. I could feel from the way the truck rolled along that its heart was in the trip. It liked the wolves inside it, the sweet odor that came from the crates. I could feel that same tireless wolf-lope developing in its wheels; it was like you might never have to stop for gas, ever again.

The truck gets very self-focused when it works like this; its heart is strong and it's good to be around it. It's good to be *with* it. You get the same feeling when you pull someone out of a ditch. Coke High and I pulled a Volkswagen out of the mud once, but Coke didn't like doing it very much. Speed, not strength, was his center. When the guy who owned the car thanked us and tried to pat Coke, the horse snorted and swung away, trying to preserve his distance, which is something a horse spends a lot of time on.

So does the truck.

Being distant lets the truck get its heart up. The truck has been cold and alone in Montana at 38 below zero. It's climbed horrible, eroded roads in Idaho. It's been burdened beyond overloading, and made it anyway. I've asked it to do these things because they build heart, and without heart all you have is a machine. You have nothing. I don't think people in Detroit know anything at all about heart. That's why everything they build dies so young.

One time in Arizona the truck and I came through one of the worst storms I've ever been in, an outrageous, angry blizzard. But we went down the road, right through it. You couldn't explain our getting through by the sort of tires I had on the truck, or the fact that I had chains on, or was a good driver, or had a lot of weight over my drive wheels or a good engine, because it was more than this. It was a contest between the truck and the blizzard—and the truck wouldn't quit. I could have gone to sleep and the truck would have just torn a road down Interstate 40 on its own. It scared the hell out of me; but it gave me heart, too.

We came off the Mogollon Rim that night and out of the storm and headed south for Phoenix. I pulled off the road to sleep for a few hours, but before I did I got out of the truck. It was raining. Warm rain. I tied a short piece of red avalanche cord into the grill. I left it there for a long time, like an eagle feather on a horse's tail. It flapped and spun in the wind. I could hear it ticking against the grill when I drove.

When I have to leave that truck I will just raise up my left arm—*Hoka hey!*—and walk away. □

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Kenneth Lash

Summer Bits

My friend Diane, after returning from a party of senior English Department members: ". . . their idea of a high old time is a dangling participle."

Riddle

In 1972, an amoral America got the President it deserved.

In 1974, an anti-intellectual America got the President it deserved.

In 1976 . . . will a violent America get the President it deserves?

* * *

For those not fortunate enough to live in Iowa, the following information: in the annual Girls State High School Basketball tournament Glenda Poock scored 71 points ("After missing her first shot of the second quarter Poock popped in three straight. . . ." —Des Moines *Register*, 3/12/75). She plays for the West Central Blue Devilettes. They lost the game, 81-83. Champions from 1970 through 1974 were Montezuma, Farragut, Roland-Story, Mediapolis, and Manilla.

* * *

Up-dating "Women's Lib": "A 38-year-old Waterloo Woman was in good condition at Schoitz Memorial Hospital Saturday with injuries she sustained in an altercation at a tavern.

"Police said Della Matlock . . . suffered multiple facial cuts when an unidentified woman struck her with a broken whiskey bottle at the Sportsman's Lounge. . . ." —Waterloo *Courier*, 3/21/75.

* * *

Almost everyone who picks it up seems to quit reading Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* somewhere around a bend between pp. 60-100. Maybe they expected it to be dirty. It's about as erotic as a cough drop. Some women expected it to be a kind of Monroe Doctrine of Liberation. It's as liberating as Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler* . . . that is, one is delighted, as at a funeral, not to be the main character.

I had expectations of it not from reviews or literary talk but from reading a few of her poems and hearing on public radio an extended interview with her, during which she came across as an excited *gamine*. I expected energy in the book; I get compulsiveness, steam-driven. That kind of energy which ends by tiring both actor and spectator. One thing after another happens . . . and yet nothing happens. Most of current filmed stories, whether movie or TV, here or abroad, concern themselves deeply with people who don't matter enough; this book concerns itself widely with events that don't seem to matter at all. They don't add, they don't subtract. Maybe they divide.

There's one thing, though. She's certainly put up some awful men. Sticks. For her, of chewing gum. Yes, reading

that book is like having to watch somebody chomp away at chewing gum, slobbery.

Only children are bearable as gum-chewers. It's the child-like in her that charms. And she's nobody's dummy. But probably poetry—observing one's self—is her better strength. Not observing others, the novel. Fear of flying? It's as if Molly Bloom had decided, there in bed, to give over soliloquizing and write *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*.

* * *

Down on the Farm:

"FARMERS SLAUGHTER 658 CALVES. Curtiss, Wis. (AP)—Protesting low cattle prices, farmers shot or slit the throats of 658 calves and buried the carcasses in trenches.

"I'm tired of rhetoric," said Steve Pavich, president of the National Farmer's Organization in Wisconsin. ". . . There is a problem out here in rural America and something has to be done about it." —Waterloo *Courier*, 10/16/74.

"BUTZ SCOFFING AT CUTBACKS WILL JUST OFFEND FARMERS. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz' politics of plenty (which farmers prefer to call a 'cheap food policy') got a flailing in Ames last week by corn and soybean growers who are determined to grow the amount of crops this year which will serve their interests—not those of government.

"It was an occasion for some heady rhetoric. . . ." —Waterloo *Courier*, 3/23/75.

Well, what could you expect? There's not much drama to be had in slaughtering soybeans.

I imagine there are some good men and women deeply troubled out there in the farmhouses. They've worked their lives out, fought the last of the ancient forces, won and lost. They made food—sometimes some money, rarely a lot and never for certain. They don't have any money, but their farm is worth $400,000 or $600,000, who knows? Have to sell it to find out. Or give it to the boys, one at the state university studying chemicals, the other studying accounting and banks.

You can't go into farming any more, only out of it. Tractors at $20,000, $30,000. Papers say you need $300,000 to start up in farming, unless you want just to rent.

People sell. Corporations come in. Agribusiness. What a word. Banks were real, right there in town. Corporations aren't. The money isn't. You borrowed $4,800 for seed. Somehow it could get paid back even if crops failed. Maybe $40,000 now, including fertilizer and pesticides, if you can get them. Can't

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afford to fail, not once. Weather or no, disease or no, prices or no. If you can't ever fail some, can't lose even once in the battle that is set up by nature for a winning and losing, then you can't go on. Not as an independent. Not as a person, with ideas and morals to hold to. It's a different world. And you're supposed to feed it, the whole thing. But farm organization leaders are yelling Cut back, Cut back, keep prices up, don't listen to your government, don't listen to hungry people. That goes against every instinct in the farmer, to hold back, not to go full force. It goes against every instinct except the one for survival. His situation is a turmoil. Emotionally, and intellectually. (Can he be expected to find it rational that wheat prices go down and bread prices go up? He knows the reasons, but are they rational?) How can he preserve his way of life, which is both a projection and a shaper of his character?

* * *

Two years ago I suggested to our State Board for Public Programs in the Humanities (serving on behalf of the National Endowment) that the important question in Iowa concerning humanities was the looming effects of corporate farming and big money on the morals, beliefs, life styles of the farmer. What would the effects be? How could the clear harmfulness coming be made less destructive, or at least more understandable in advance of its full arrival? The Humanities Board did nothing about it. (Humanities Boards' larger idea of constructive spending and planning is to go into towns and encourage 14 women and 2 men to gather regularly for the purpose of discussing great books.)

Meanwhile The Marketplace has come to farming. Filling one pocket with money, cleaning out of the other perhaps the last pocket of staunchness, rough and bloody honesty, and economic independence left in the land.

* * *

Postscript:

"YOUNG FARMERS AVERAGE $16,600. The average Iowa Farm Bureau member under 30 years of age made $16,600 last year and had a net worth of $111,000, organization leaders were told Wednesday."—Des Moines *Register*, 2/20/75.

What stance, what points of view, will we expect from these new young farmers?

* * *

There is this woman from Texas who went to China with Shirley MacLaine's group, and there she was in pants and blouse, hugging and kissing the Chinese ladies, drawlin' away at them, laughing and dancing, full of zip. Then she's back in this country, appearing on TV with the other ladies who went, watching the film of their trip and commenting. She's wearing a proper suit of some kind with a proper scarf that somehow just perches on her neck; her hair is sprayed into a 'do' with liquid steel; her face is made up perfectly, i.e., into a mask. She sits there, looking embalmed. "Ah've had sixty-four speakin' engagements since ah got back, and ah tell em all the same thing, the difference is one word —freedom. We got it and they don't."

Spring Poem (annual)

In my garden of thrips
and of the legendary aphid,
flies
rise out of their own
armpits, worms
go round in circles,
having forgot
which is their front end.
Birds peck themselves dizzy
at husks they hollowed yesterday.
But let no one say
we are not busy
here. The grass steams,
sedum creeps, periwinkle
pyracanthus rex, the yellow valium
unwind. Mother-in-law's tongue,
dumb-cane, wort, pizzicati
and the succulents
gather. Christ's thorn
bestirs. Rank upon rank
of weeds advance. My wife
arrives with supermarket plants.
Here, and there, they would be pretty
she says, handing them over,
wiping her hands
on her pants. Only the overwhelming
presence of a cardinal
keeps me from her throat.
Have a little taste of foxglove,
I say. The castor beans
are fat this year. She
sticks out her tongue.
You could plow a field with it.
O, how cute, my daughter says,
meaning the rabbit at the quince
or the chipmunks
storming out of the drainpipes.
I call her a stupid sod
but she hasn't been to England yet.
I go to the garage to get
the fertilizer. Sadder annually,
but not wiser.

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THOMAS R. BLACKBURN

SCIENCE & THE OUTER GLOOM

OR: WHAT GOES ON OUT THERE IN OUR HEARTS?

We pass our days in a pool of light—a light fashioned by science, powered by an industrious economy. Yet, we cannot assert a circle of light without at the same time asserting, by the very circumference of that circle, the horizoning darkness. Within the circle are reason, reasonableness, and custom by which we usually claim to live. We thank—often at their prompting—industry and science for the circle of light.

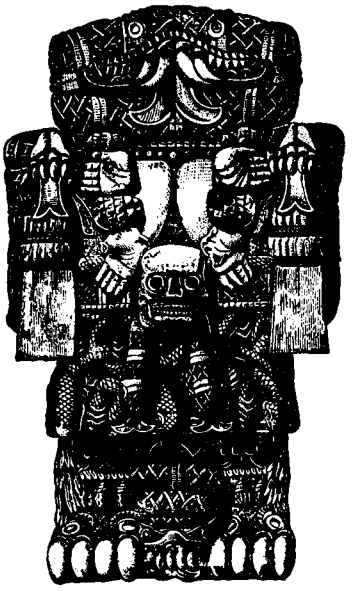
Yet skeptics like William Blake and his recent exponent Theodore Roszak[1] tug us passionately outward toward the dark and uncertain horizon. So bright is the light of modern technological organization, so ever-present its benefits—indeed, modern life resembles nothing so much as the interior of an over-illuminated fast food joint—that one may be disinclined to stumble outward into the buggy gloom. This the more so if one earns one's bread by the light of technological reason; if one is, for example, a teacher, a scientist, a salesman, a truck driver, . . .

Behind the horizon there has always been much baffling activity, false dawns and rumblings—whether of cannon or of sweet rainstorms remains much debated. Voyagers from it have returned with tales of Shangri-La—a land of myths, dreams, symbols, and moods; but they tell also of monsters and of the terrifying pit at the edge of the world—domination, exploitation, cruelty, war. Fascination with this horizon has recurred like a dream throughout intellectual history primarily, I suppose, because it represents an inescapable part of what it means to be human—a heritage, perhaps, from a prerational homeland, beyond the encircling horizon.

If we now consider whether irrationality represents any kind of horizon—new or old—for science and scientists, we may be inclined to doubt it. The "hard" sciences, at least, are firmly within the circle of rationality, with at most a pinch of chemotherapy thrown over the left shoulder to ward off demons. The point of science is to examine the physical world, a small part at a time, in the light of reason, and to leave behind unreason. And it is certainly true that we have stayed away from the sunny uplands of nonrationality—from myths, dreams, and emotion—and have dealt only, and then ambivalently, with domination, exploitation, and war. (As one of my colleagues pointed out recently, these one-sided renunciations work both ways: the radical mystic condemns the constructive and creative side of rationality, but may be ready enough to use it for exploitative ends.)

Science and Literature

However, a scientist may experience a delighted shock to recognize grand themes of science appearing in imaginative literature, including that literature that hovers nearest fantasy and myth. I refer not so much to science fiction, which is generally far too self-consciously scientistic to achieve this, but to the literature of such writers as Walt Whitman, John Barth, and Jorge Luis Borges. Their imagery derives its power from the *embodiment*—as opposed to the mere citation, or display—of high rationality about the physical universe in the high irrationality of poetry and fiction. Let me first illustrate with a common but powerful insight—that of Walt Whitman into the human meaning of cycles of nutrients in the ecosphere:



And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.

. . . . .

And as to you Corpse, I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me.
I smell the roses sweet-scented and growing
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of the melons.
And as to you Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

1. Roszak, Theodore, *Where the Wasteland Ends*, New York, Doubleday, 1972.

Based on an address to the session, "New Horizons for Science and Scientists", Forum on Physics and Society, American Physical Society.

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Or, if the notion of the conservation of matter seems too homely, there is John Barth's evocation of Gibbs' *grand ensemble* through the mind of Henry Burlingame in *The Sotweed Factor*, in which Burlingame leads his young pupils to the idea that the world as we know it—in which, for example, France is shaped like a teakettle—is only one of infinitely many imaginable worlds, in most of which France would *not* be shaped like a teakettle, if there were a France at all. The same idea is given alternative realizations by Jorge Luis Borges ("The Garden of Forking Paths"; "The Babylon Lottery"). And, while we speak of thermodynamics, Borges' story "The Library of Babel" is as good a realization of the heat death of the universe (expressed in information-theoretic, rather than thermal, entropic terms) as I care to contemplate.

Such citations are easily multiplied. For example, a vision of mankind as that temporarily organized subset of matter privileged to contemplate itself is given as convincingly by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. in *Cat's Cradle* as, more recently, by the logician G. Spencer Brown[2] or the physicist J. A. Wheeler[3]. But the ultimate lesson is clear. Literature and science confront the same universe and must remain, at heart, true to that universe.

Thus I think that, to the abuse that has been heaped on C. P. Snow since his discovery of the Two Cultures, we might add the observation that literati are not all *that* illiterate in science. To take Snow's own example, I suggest as a superb formulation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics the following by Dylan Thomas:

> *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower*
> *Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees*
> *Is my destroyer.*
> *And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose*
> *My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.*

Let me at once make three comments about these literary parallels to scientific insights: (1) Thomas' poem or Borges' story would be a terrible starting point from which to calculate the efficiency of a turbine or the pH of a buffer. The kind of "science" embodied in literature is static and contemplative, not of much use for prediction or control. But I shall want to say later that the same is true of an important part of science. (2) I am not concerned with the question of overt, linear "influence" in the literary historical sense. I don't know if John Barth ever read a line of Gibbs, though I strongly doubt it. His insight into the infinite possibilities of infinitely multiple worlds, and the limitations inherent in living in only one of them at a time may stand on its own. (3) If I were only playing a game of spotting accidental parallelisms, the game would reduce to a sort of intellectual stamp-collecting. On the contrary, I suggest that the great "scientific" truths are great human truths, and the fact that representations of them appear simultaneously in the apparently unconnected worlds of physics and literature may signal their existence as entities in a central, human core. What one might call such entities presents a problem. I shall adopt a suggestion of Frederick Thompson and call them myths, thus consciously and intentionally placing them in a class with other deep and recurring myths such as those of creation, the cycle of the seasons, and so forth.

Scientific "elegance" and non-rationality

Let me, then, postulate science as an activity that springs from very near the center of the human personality, where the fundamental furniture of myths, dreams, and symbols are also stored. Is it possible that the sources of highest rationality and highest irrationality are in fact coupled? What convinces me that they are is the fact that at the heart of science lie the related notions of *elegance* and *power*. The greatness of such concepts as the Second Law or symmetry groups is in the fact that in a small and pleasing package they contain much truth. In them the confusion of the perceivable world lies compressed as in a seed.

For purposes of manipulation, it is their power of generating mathematical formalisms that makes these concepts important; yet the other side of elegance is an aesthetic one, in which contemplation is sufficient, and it is of this side that I want to speak. In a scientific context, aesthetic considerations are non-rational. This is a striking and important thought because here, at the very heart of science, we find an envoy from beyond the horizon, whispering delights into the ear of the king of rationality—an envoy, fortunately, from the sunny uplands of myth, symbol, and dream.

Perhaps a relatively simple example will illustrate what I am describing. It is clear from any amount of experiment and reasoning that water molecules are v-shaped. If they were not, they wouldn't stay together as a liquid at room temperature. If asked *why* they are bent, I would answer in what, to a quantum physicist, might be a brutal oversimplification: they are because the oxygen atom has four spin-pairs of electrons in its valence shell, and the spatial correlations of these pairs keeps them as far apart as possible on the coordination sphere of the oxygen—namely at the corners of a tetrahedron, so that I expect the H-O-H angle to be in the neighborhood of 109°. I would rather carry in mind the seed of this simple theory of molecular geometry than to look all day at a computer printout of the molecule's shape based on *ab initio* numerical calculation of the minimum-energy bond angle—just because, although the numerical calculation *may* be more accurate, the other is more elegant. I prefer to believe in it (subject to its limitations) partly because I can easily apply it to many other molecules without elaborate re-programming, but primarily because it appeals to me in a way that is, at heart, sensuous. I can get from it a *feel* for molecular geometry that the limitations of my mind prevent me from attaining through numerical approximations. This is not to say that I, or any other scientist, would cling to any model, however elegant, after it has been proven false or seriously misleading—and in fact, there are a few cases in which the simple theory of molecular geometry fails. But I would drop it then in full confidence that, whatever principle lies at the heart of molecular geometry, it is even more elegant and powerful than this one, not less.

Considerations of elegance—that is, considerations essentially non-rational—are very important to creative science.

2. Spencer Brown, G., *The Laws of Form*, New York, Bantam Books, 1973.

3. Wheeler, J. A., "The Universe as Home for Man", *Am. Scientist 62*, 683 (1974).

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They may be closely related to the mythic structure of the mind on which great imaginative writers draw. Unfortunately, most scientists, by their own avowal, are not involved in fundamentally creative work. Of course, even the most humble working-out of well-understood principles can be done in a way that involves operational creativity, experimental economy, and so forth. But permit me to assert, because it is true of myself and of the scientists that I see, that most of us are doing hack work most of the time—work, that is, more closely allied with domination and exploitation than with myth and aesthetics.

In particular, I recall my academic training, which was excellent; I regret that the small creative flourish of the doctoral research was so heavily compromised by the exploitive concern to get results, be done with it, and get the degree. I do not claim that, because I allowed *my* education to be inelegant, everyone's is; yet as I talk to graduate students and university teachers, it does not seem so very unusual, either. The point I want to make in bringing up graduate education is the close relationship that I suspect exists between irrationality in the dark sense (exploitation and domination) and inelegance and unfreedom. Where the scientist is forced by his circumstances to be preoccupied with exploitive ends, his work is likely to be inelegant and thus alienated from the core of his humanity.

In an earlier essay in *Science* [4] I tried to show that the science that has been so successful in the past 400 or so years has succeeded by projecting multidimensional worlds onto mental spaces of reduced dimensionality, and then working out the properties of the resulting projections. And indeed there is nothing wrong with doing that as long as one bears in mind that information is sacrificed in the process of projection. It seemed to me that one way of retaining the complex worlds lost in this process was to regard the abstractions of science as bearing a complementary relationship to directly perceived nature, and to accord to the complementary models of nature—the abstract and the sensuous—equal significance when we talk about nature. This would imply that the sensuous model is part of science, just as wave and particle formalisms are equally important, complementary expressions of quantum physics.

It is also possible that there may be moral consequences of such an expansion of the frame of science. It is the process of projection and abstraction that fosters the scientist's claim of objectivity, and thus of the ethical neutrality of his science. Most of the response to that essay in *Science* came from psychologists, and it dawned on me that I had stumbled into the midst of a running debate among psychologists over the significance of mentalistic, or intuitive states *vs.* behavior as the key to the human psyche. Perhaps psychologists ought to read Niels Bohr on this question—it appears to have been one of his earliest applications of the idea of complementarity, made even before the so-called Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics was fully formulated. In any case, the results, if any, of this debate among psychologists are, to my mind, as important to the future of science as any of the classic debates among physicists. If a human is to be understood as a bundle of conditioned responses only, then science (and with it mankind) will have made permanent its pact with dark irrationality—with exploitation and domination.

If science is to remain free, and not become the permanent handmaiden of exploitation, it must have a strong and self-reliant—that is, creative—soul of its own. To me, this implies that science should become more strongly mythic and aesthetic in nature. In this process a knowledge of his own mind will become as important to the physicist as that of mathematics and mechanics. In this connection it is surely no accident that the creative geniuses of science have nearly all been deeply interested in philosophy, psychology, art, and music. One need only mention the great physicists of the 20th century —Einstein, Bohr, Schrodinger, Oppenheimer, Heisenberg —to realize that each of these men was deeply involved with ultimate questions of human values—questions that are, as we have found over the centuries, not amenable to *ab initio* rational analysis. These men were not studying philosophy and art as hobbies. Reading their philosophical writings forces one to the conclusion that the deep study of science had led them inevitably to the consideration of other forms of truth, and that they saw these other truths as of a piece with their science.

Training for a humane science

We can't all be great geniuses. In the often-quoted preface to their *Thermodynamics* [5], Lewis and Randall describe the "cathedral" of science as being the result of giving ordinary human effort a direction and a purpose. And there is no reason that the ordinary human efforts we workmen give to science cannot be as involved with humanity as the extraordinary ones of the great architects. We certainly don't need more scientists, but we do need more humanists trained in science. Perhaps science as a whole, big and little, would be a better, more independent enterprise if we recognized more explicitly that the best science—the elegant and creative science—flows from a non-rational human core, from which flow also aesthetic and moral judgments. Scientific training founded on such a human core might fit a scientist to function creatively and freely in a complex and complementary world. At present, our education of scientists is, in the world of ideas, severely monastic. No wonder, then, that we produce monks with little knowledge of the full range of human experience. No wonder that so much of science is so many illuminated manuscripts, to be compiled, abstracted, indexed, and re-indexed [6].

Since I take the position that much damage is done to the growth of scientists during their scholastic years, I have the responsibility, and the temerity, to suggest what I think would be a better pattern of training. Because I am not optimistic about the possibilities of great reform in science education, I have allowed myself the luxury of pessimistic unreality in the list that follows. Nevertheless, these are the things that I wish I had known about before I started the practice of science; and I think that they ought to be an organic part of the education of any scientist:

4. Blackburn, T. R., "Sensuous-Intellectual Complementarity in Science", *Science* 172, 1003 (1971).

5. Lewis, G. N., and Randall, M., *Thermodynamics*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1923.

6. Butler, J. N., "Information Pollution and the Ignorance Explosion", *Chemical Technology 1972*, 139.

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SCIENCE	I:	Myth and symbol;
SCIENCE	II:	Languages; linguistics and metaphor;
SCIENCE	III:	Psychology, "deep" and behavioral;
SCIENCE	IV:	Music and dance;
SCIENCE	V:	Poetry and the novel;
SCIENCE	VI:	Oriental religions and philosophies;
SCIENCE	VII:	Elementary physics, etc.

I intend these not as required courses, to be endured and forgotten, but as advised accomplishments; the scientist who omits them should be subject to no sanction but the regret that he had thereby chosen so much less freedom.

Victor Weisskopf, in an essay in *Science*[7] suggests that a doctoral thesis consisting of "a lucid and impressive presentation of some aspect of modern science" might be "worth more than a piece of so-called 'original' research of the type found in many Ph.D. theses, and . . . may require more maturity and inventiveness." To synthesize creatively from the work of others is, indeed, far more valuable than to extend (*i.e.*, to exploit) a graduate advisor's ideas to yet another molecule (or particle, or animal). I can only add that to show the overall significance, if any, of one's own work to the central core of human experience would be an even more worthwhile feat, calling for considerable sensitivity, humility, and judgment.

"Relevance" in the teaching of science

Let me close with a parting note on the subject of relevance in education. As a textbook writer and teacher, I may be entitled to deliver myself of some unkind words at least about my own writing and teaching, and about some that has found its way into print and speech before mine. The sudden arrival of the wave of "relevance" on the beachheads of science brought (and left behind) a remarkable deposit of matter that would have seemed out of place ten years ago; planks torn from the decks of industry, tangled garlands of ecology, and of course the great (and stinking) leviathan of nuclear weaponry. I cannot wholly regard this disjointed flotsam as a welcome addition to the intellectual landscape. The *ad hoc* use of scraps of technology to exemplify a catalog of abstractions is too superficial to answer the urge that motivated the cry for relevance in the first place. The process is sometimes referred to as adding flesh to the bare bones of theory—and that is a very apt, if nauseating, way to describe the result. You cannot make a person by slapping some flesh onto a skeleton. There is only one way that I know of to do it, and it is a pleasant, but ultimately time-consuming, process.

If the relevance of science is not there from its inception, it can't be superimposed later. The course of learning that I outlined above is intended to allow the student's mind to grow as a whole, beginning from what I take to be the most fundamental and uniquely human seed. Rational science in that context would be like the skeleton of a living being; supporting and being moved by live, supple flesh—the whole structure vital, healthy, and humane because it is human. □

7. Weisskopf, V. F., "The Significance of Science", *Science* 176, 138 (1972).

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KATHE AGODOA

MOUNTAIN

Mother, I once said, there might be a place
more beautiful than Minnesota. No sense
looking outside your own backyard, she said.
But two years ago I was canned in a little
yellow car, a tin insect crawling up
a winding winding winding road—for god's sake
in Montana they call strange paths freeways—
winding until it crested, and, as I slowly
slid down into the valley an azure-range
rose up before my view. My God, I said.
(what's so unusual about that? I say "my god"
so often my three year old says to me: My God,
Mother, can I have my breakfast now?) My God!
I said, the first time I saw the mountains.

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RICHARD YATES:

From the novel
Disturbing the Peace,
to be published in September by
Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence Inc.

BELLEVUE

Bellevue—or whatever part of the labyrinth of Bellevue they arrived at—was so bewildering that Paul Borg's own mind went briefly out of focus. He stood around with his mouth open like a fool's, holding Wilder's suitcase, until someone handed him a printed form headed CITY OF NEW YORK, DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALS, showed him where to sign his name, where to put his home and office phone numbers and told him to write "friend" in the space marked "Relationship." He did that quickly because they wouldn't let him see Wilder until it was done; then he found he couldn't see him anyway because Wilder's arms were slung tight around the necks of two big orderlies who dragged him still shouting toward a closed elevator, where a third orderly waited with a wheelchair, and they not only forced him into it but strapped him in. When the elevator door slid open they shoved him inside, and across the back of the chair was the stenciled word PSYCHO.

"Look," Borg said to the nearest white-coated man he could find. "Listen: what's the procedure here?"

The man smiled, shrugged and spoke rapidly in what could have been either Spanish or Italian.

"Are you a doctor?"

"Me? No. Doctor over there."

"This your bag, mister?" another voice said.

"No. I mean yes—wait—here, I'll take it."

Then he said "Doctor, excuse me, but I'm a little—what exactly is the procedure here?"

This man was very young, and handsome enough to play the romantic lead in some movie about a great metropolitan hospital. "The procedure? Thanks, honey," he said to a nurse, or a nurses' aide, who had brought him a hamburger and a container of coffee.

"You're very welcome."

"What I mean is," Borg said, "could you tell me what they're going to do with Mr. Wilder?"

"Wilder." He set his coffee down, picked up a clipboard and squinted at it. "Oh, yes. And you're the man who signed him in, right? Mr. Berg?"

"Borg. I'm an attorney." And he pulled his coat straight as further proof of respectability. The warm brown smell of the hamburger was making him weak with hunger.

"Well, he'll be treated like any other patient, Mr. Borg," the doctor said with his mouth full. "They'll put him to sleep, first of all."

"And how soon do you think he might be released?"

"Hard to say. This is Friday night, and it's the Labor Day Weekend. The psychiatrists won't be back until Tuesday, and it'll probably be Wednesday or Thursday before they can review his case. After that it's entirely up to them."

"My God. I'd forgotten about Labor Day. This is—the point is I'd never have signed that paper if I'd realized—I mean this is really very—unfortunate."

"I wouldn't worry about it," the doctor said around his chewing, spilling crumbs of meat and bread from his lips. "I'd say you've done the right thing. Look: you're an attorney; you deal with the police at all?"

"No. My clients are—no, I don't deal with the police."

"Well, okay; even so. You've seen the shape he's in." He wiped his mouth on one white sleeve and left a streak of ketchup. "Which is better? Having him safe in here for a while, or out walking the streets until the cops pick him up and book him for disturbing the peace?"

Earlier novels by RICHARD YATES are Revolutionary Road *and* A Special Providence. *His short fiction is widely anthologized.*

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Wilder woke up soaked with sweat, breathing stale and fetid air. A naked light bulb shone in his eyes and he found he was in a steel-framed bunk slung by chains from the wall, like a bunk in a troopship or a jail.

". . . Everybody out," a voice called, and there were other sounds: groans and curses, wretched coughing and hawking, a loud fart, the creak and bang of bunks being folded back and clamped against the wall. "*Let's* go; *let's* go. Everybody out."

When he sat up a hand closed around his shoulder and rolled him onto the floor. He was wearing grey cotton pajamas that were much too big for him: the pants tripped his stumbling bare feet and the sleeves hung to his fingertips. Swaying and squinting under the lights, he rolled up the sleeves first, disclosing a loose plastic bracelet that read WILDER JOHN C. He bent over to roll up the pants but was kicked from behind and fell to his hands, and he looked up frightened into the angry face of a Negro in pajamas like his own.

"Watch your ass, man. This here's the *corridor*. You got no business hunkerin' down playin' with yourself; get up and *walk*."

And he did. Steel-mesh panels were being drawn across the folded bunks to prevent anyone from using them: this was indeed the corridor, the place for walking. It was yellow and green and brown and black; it was neither very long nor very wide, but it was immensely crowded with men of all ages from adolescence to senility, whites and Negroes and Puerto Ricans, half of them walking one way and half the other, the dismaying variety of their faces moving into the glare of lights and then into shadows and then into the lights again. Some were talking to one another and some talked to themselves, but most were silent. He felt warm grit under his feet until he stepped on something slick; then he saw that the black floor ahead was scattered with gobs of phlegm. A few of the walking men wore dirty paper slippers, and he envied them; a few were smoking, with packs of cigarettes in their pajama-top pockets, which puckered the roof of his mouth. Then he saw that some weren't wearing pajama tops but straitjackets, and he wanted to whimper like a child.

There were closed windows at both ends of the corridor, covered with steel mesh: the light outside was drab—either an early grey morning or a late grey afternoon—and there was nothing to see but airshafts and windowless walls.

Near the middle of the corridor stood a Negro orderly in hospital greens, and he hurried toward him with a mouthful of questions—Look: where're my clothes? Where's my money? Where's a phone? What's the *deal* here?—but when he confronted the man he felt small and shy and all he knew was that his bladder was about to burst.

"Excuse me," he said. "Where's the bathroom?"

"Over there."

And he followed the pointed finger into a bright stinking latrine where men squatted on toilet bowls or stood jockeying for position at a long urinal trough.

"Now this here," another orderly explained, "is your toothbrush. Way you can always tell is because it got your name on it. See that tape? *Wilder*. When you done with it, put it back here in this rack. Ain't nobody gonna use this toothbrush but you, and you never gonna use nobody else's toothbrush, understand? That way, nobody pick up no trenchmouth or nothing like that. Understand?"

But nobody was allowed his own razor. The men stood four and five deep waiting to shave at a steamed-up mirror under watchful, official eyes.

". . . Soon's you done you rinse that razor and lay it on the shelf. Ain't no use foolin' with that razor; you can't get that blade out. That razor's *locked*. . . ."

". . . Showers for the new men *only*. Showers for the new men *only*. Not you, Gonsalez, you come on back outa there. . . ."

There was no soap in the communal shower room and no way of regulating the water: the new men slid around on greasy duckboards and tried to clean themselves until each was given a thin towel in one hand and his own wadded pajamas in the other.

"Can I have slippers?"

"Ain't no more slippers. Slippers all gone."

And then it was back to the corridor with nothing to do but walk. He passed a locked door with a small wired-glass window and peered inside to discover a padded cell. Canvas mats of the kind used by wrestlers and gymnasts were hung from the walls and spread on the floor. It was vacant, but the one next door was occupied: a man in a straitjacket lay face down in it, as still as death, with a dark stain of piss around his thighs.

". . . I don't care! I don't *care!*"

Both columns of walkers shrank aside to make way for the spectacle of a young white man shadow-boxing down the middle of the hall. He was stripped to the waist and he'd neatly ripped off his pajama pants to the length of prizefighters' trunks; he was bobbing and weaving, jabbing and hooking in a swirl of yellow dust motes.

". . . Can't you idiots understand? I don't *care!* I *want* my father to see me like this!"

"All right, Henry; easy, now," an orderly was saying, coming up from behind to put a hand on his shoulder, but the shadow-boxer spun and faced him with both fists cocked.

"Don't call me 'Henry,' you dumb black bastard—call me Doctor or I'll break every fucking bone in your—"

"You ain't gonna break nothin', Doctor," a second orderly said, and the two of them held his arms. Both orderlies were bigger than he; they had no trouble turning him around and leading him down the corridor. He didn't struggle in their grip but his shouting rose until he sounded on the verge of tears.

". . . God damn it, if I want my father to see me like this it's none of your dumb, black, ignorant, motherfucking—"

"Your father iddn't gonna see you no way, Doctor; come along easy now, 'less you want Roscoe to shoot you out."

"Yeah, yeah, shoot me *out*, that's all you know. Big deal! Ah, you poor, dumb— whaddya do? Go home and tell your wives, 'Hey, baby, I got me a doctor today'? 'Got me a real white doctor right in the ass'? Well don't forget I'm naming both of you, and your little buddy Roscoe too, tried to send me up to Wingdale. I'm filing a mal— a mal— a mal*practice* suit against this hospital, and when the facts when the facts are out you'll all be. . . ."

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He was out of sight now, and out of earshot because of the laughter and jeers and catcalls that broke in his wake. Another Negro in greens was hurrying down the corridor with a hypodermic syringe; he stopped and squinted at it under a light, holding it high while he thumbed the plunger just enough to make a drop of liquid appear on the point of the needle, then he went on toward the shouting man.

"Go get 'im, Roscoe," somebody called. "Fix 'im up good." And there was more laughter as the columns began to move again.

Wilder felt a light nudge at his elbow and thought he heard a voice say "Want to kiss me?"

"What?"

A remarkably handsome Negro boy was smiling there, wearing a turban made of his pajama top, gently swivelling his shoulders to display the beauty of his naked torso and holding his half-erect cock in his hand. "Do you want to kiss me?"

"No."

"Oh, it's all right. It's all right. You can kiss me if you want, but only if you say 'I love you' first."

It was time for breakfast. Double doors were opened at one end of the corridor and both columns became a jostling crowd.

". . . All right, hold it; *hold* it now. Two at a time. Two at a time, or nobody gonna get *nothin'* to eat. . . ."

The sense of entrapment was even worse inside the messhall: once you'd been shoved crouching and sidling down the narrow space between a long table and its high-backed, immovable wooden bench there was no way out. Wilder sat pressed between a toothless, ancient man and a fat boy whose wet mouth hung open as if in pain from the cramp of the table against his belly. Each of them received a plastic bowl of glutenous oatmeal with canned milk and a mug of lukewarm coffee, and Wilder didn't know he was hungry until he'd dug into the oatmeal with a big tin army-surplus spoon. If he could eat, if he could drink this coffee and find a cigarette and a telephone, there might still be a chance of the world's coming back to normal. But the old man couldn't lift the shaking spoon to the reach of his gums without spilling it, and the fat boy picked up his bowl in both hands and plunged his face into it, slobbering like a dog as the porridge slid down his chest; then a shrill voice at one of the other tables rose to panic: "Lemme *outa* here, lemme *outa* here, lemme *outa* here. . . ."

When the messhall set him free at last he found that the men who looked the least insane had begun to congregate at the head of the corridor where there was a little ell facing the locked front door. On a high bookkeeper's stool beside the door sat a policeman—not a uniformed hospital guard but a real New York City cop, complete with badge and dangling nightstick and holstered pistol. He chewed gum steadily and talked to no one, not even the orderlies, and he wore the kind of sunglasses whose lenses were silver mirrors on the outside: if you tried to look into his eyes you saw only a double image of your own craning face. Even so, this seemed the best place to be: the place where rational things were most likely to happen.

"Hey there, Shorty. How's old Shorty today?" The man who said this wasn't much taller than himself, and he was ugly—a sallow face with close-set eyes and a big humorless smile full of bad teeth—but his pajama pocket bulged with cigarettes. "I seen you when they brought you in last night. *Boy* you was high."

"I was?" He could remember nothing of last night after the ride in the ambulance with Paul Borg rubbing his back.

"Yellin' and screamin', talkin' a mile a minute; they shot you out and you *still* wouldn't shut up. I figured, Jesus, this is some tough customer we got here; this must be some *big* son of a bitch. Then I seen you was even smaller'n me, and laugh? I damn near died."

"Yeah, well, look. Could I have a cigarette?"

"I'll save you," the man said, and turned away.

" 'Save' me?"

"He won't save you," another voice said. "He never saves nobody. He's a prick."

The door opened then, letting in a rush of cool air—not fresh air, but cool and better-smelling if only because it came from some wider, cleaner corridor—and there was a loud, happy chorus of "Charlie!" . . . "Hey, Charlie!" . . . "How are ya, Charlie?"

He was well over six feet tall and built like a heavyweight, a Negro dressed in greens like the others but dominating all of them, dominating everyone as he pocketed his key-ring and moved slowly into the ward, trundling a medicine cart. "Good morning . . . Good morning," he said in a deep, rich voice, and even the cop said "Morning, Charlie," after making sure the door was locked behind him.

"Hey Charlie, can I see you a second?"

"Charlie listen: 'member yesterday I asked you about somethin'?"

They swarmed around him, coming from all sides as he wheeled his cart to a stop in the exact middle of the corridor, where he raised his head to address them all.

"Nourishment, gentlemen!" he called out to one end, and "Nourishment, gentlemen!" to the other. The trays of the medicine cart held many shot-glasses filled with what looked like bourbon whiskey or maple syrup: it was neither, though it tasted a little like both.

"You bring my paper, Charlie?" said a man with a dirty bundle of newspapers under his arm.

"Oh, now, Mr. Schultz, you have plenty of papers. Use up the papers you have, then maybe I'll bring you a new one." And he turned to one of the orderlies. "How many admissions last night?"

"Eight. We got a hundred and seventeen on the ward now."

Charlie winced and shook his big head. "That's too many. And there'll be more coming in today, more tomorrow, more Monday. We don't have fac*il*ities for that many." With a jangle of his key-ring he opened a door marked KEEP OUT, briefly revealing what looked like a snug little den—a table and chairs, shelves with cups and a hotplate and coffee-makings—and came out with two packs of Pall Malls in his hand.

"All right, one at a time, gentlemen," he said to the eager crowd that pressed around him. "Form a line to the right, please; one at a time and only one apiece. Not you, Mr. Randolph, you've got a pack in your pocket. You know

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Everything was slightly improved with Charlie's arrival, with the "Nourishment" and the ward cigarettes: the lights were less glaring and the shadows less dark, and there were new discoveries to be made: a long wooden bench against one wall, other places to sit in a recess between sections of folded-up bunks and even a place to lie down—four dirty mattresses on the floor of an alcove at the far end, well away from the mainstream of walkers. But the padded cells were still there, six of them, and one now contained the twisted figure of the man who'd shadow-boxed and screamed before breakfast. He lay with his mouth still open in the shape of outrage, as if ready to scream again in his drugged sleep, and his dark hair glistened with sweat.

"Who shot Dr. Spivack out?" Charlie's heavy voice inquired.

"Roscoe, Charlie. He was actin' up real bad."

"What happened to his pants?"

"Tore 'em off himself, tryna make like a fighter. Then he started yellin' about his malpractice suit and all that; wasn't no other way to handle it."

"I don't understand that. I thought he was coming along very well."

"He has good days and bad days, Charlie."

"Mm." And Charlie got out his keys again. "Well, the least we can do is open the door. I don't want him waking up with that door locked. Get him a new suit of pajamas, too."

"Okay, Charlie."

"Ah, Charlie, you're a prince," said a fragile, palsied man of seventy or more. "A prince among men. I swear to Jesus— I swear to Jesus you're a saint, Charlie."

"Well, Mr. Foley, I thank you for the compliment but I've already given out the cigarettes and I happen to know you received one because you tried to take two."

"Ah, Mother of God, how can you think of cigarettes? It's spiritual help I need, Charlie. Spiritual help."

"I'm not the man to see about that. Why don't you go sit down a while? I have other people to attend to. You, sir; are you one of the new men? What's your name?"

"Wilder. John Wilder."

"Did you take your Nourishment, Mr. Wilder?"

"Yeah, 'Nourishment,' " said the old man. "You know what it is? It's formaldehyde."

"That's enough, Mr. Foley; you go along now." Then he said "It's Peraldehyde, Mr. Wilder. You get it three times a day; it's very good for you. Settles your nerves."

"I see. And are you the chief orderly, or—or what?"

"I'm a male nurse. There's always a nurse on duty here; my shift's eight to five."

"Oh. Well, look: it's very important that I get to a phone as soon as poss—"

"Oh, no, Mr. Wilder; you won't be making any phone calls here."

"Well how soon—I mean when can I see a doctor?"

That was when he learned it would be Tuesday before the psychiatrists came back, that it might well be Thursday before they could interview him and that the length of his stay thereafter would depend on their decision. "So meanwhile," Charlie said, "I'd suggest you try and make yourself comfortable."

He lumbered away, trailing other supplicants in his wake, and Wilder stood watching him go for what seemed an intolerably long time. " 'Comfortable,' " he said, and then suddenly he was padding after him, running, stepping in slime again and surprised by the shrillness of his own voice: "Comfortable in *this* fucking place? Are you outa your fucking *mind?*"

Charlie turned back, looming over the chattering man with one long forefinger raised in admonition. "Mr. Wilder, I'm telling you now to keep your voice down and keep your temper under control. I don't want to have to tell you again."

Yellow and green and brown and black; black and brown and green and yellow. The only way to shut out the sounds and the smells of this place was to concentrate on the colors, and to walk. Up past the latrine to where the cop sat; turn, back past the messhall to the other end; turn. A small man could move unnoticed in a crowd like this if he kept his mouth shut and his eyes front and his arms close to avoid touching anyone. He could breathe at measured intervals and keep his own counsel; he could even burst into tears if he did so quietly; nobody would notice.

Instead of crying he sat down in the only vacant place on one of the corridor benches, and a brown hand slid onto his thigh.

"It's all right."

"Huh?"

"It's all right. You can kiss me if you want, but only if you say 'I love you' first."

He was up and walking again, and he'd made three circuits of the ward when he found an empty mattress in the alcove at the far end. Sitting was better than walking and lying down was better still, though it sank him deeper into the smells of sweat and feet. He squirmed and sprawled face-down in total collapse—the hell with everything—and he even slept for a while, or thought he was asleep, until his eyes came open and saw that the men who lay very close on either side of him were masturbating.

But after lunch there was another call of "Nourishment, gentlemen!" and another round of ward cigarettes, and he found himself walking with Dr. Spivack. He didn't recognize him at first because he wore fresh pajamas and had combed his hair and his face was free of hysteria: it was a tightly clenched, sardonic face.

"You come in last night?"

"Yes."

"Half these poor bastards don't even know where they are. You know where you are?"

"Bellevue."

"Gotta be more specific than that, buddy. Bellevue Hospital is a great public medical institution. It's—"

"Okay; the psycho ward."

"And you honestly think there's only one? My God, man, there's an entire psychiatric *wing* in Bellevue. Seven floors, each one worse than the one beneath, and this is the top. The worst. This is the Men's Violence Ward. Are you blind? Can't you see these clowns in straitjackets? Can't you see that cop? There's got to be a cop on duty here because some of us inmates are police cases. Criminals. Nobody knows who; I don't even think the orderlies know. I don't even think Charlie knows." He had been walking briskly, making

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Wilder stumble and hurry to keep up with him, but now he stopped short, grabbed Wilder's arm and spun him around to face a stiff, jabbing index finger. "How about you? Huh? You a police case?"

"No. How about letting go of my arm?"

Spivack laughed and punched him on the shoulder. It seemed to be meant as a punch of camaraderie, but it hurt. "Hell, I'm only kidding; I knew you were okay from your face. Know how you look? Like some little kid's lost his mother in a department store. What's your name?"

And for at least an hour Dr. Spivack talked, steering Wilder through the crowds on either side of the corridor, pausing only to interrupt himself with little advisory asides—"Don't ever take a flop in there unless you *really* have to," he said of the alcove with the mattresses; "that's Jerk-off City"—and most of his talk was autobiography.

He came from what he called a medical family. All his male forebears had been distinguished doctors in Germany until his father fled with his own family to this country in the Thirties. His oldest brother was "tops: a first-rate heart man at Cornell Medical Center," and the second was doing all right too, considering he'd never been the brightest guy in the world; he was a radiologist up at Mount Sinai—"*You* know, he's dumb, but dumb in a way that doesn't show. And he's married to the most glorious piece of ass you ever saw, this big blonde Wisconsin girl with legs like—legs like—legs that defy description." Then came his sister, who had married a psychiatrist—and wasn't that the God damnedest thing? His own sister, for Christ's sake, actually married to one of these Sigmund Freud freaks?—and then came the youngest and the favorite, himself.

". . . Ah, I had my share of suffering when we first came over; my mother died; they called me the Katzenjammer Kike in junior high and I got a few bloody noses, but don't worry, I'm not trying to break your heart. I always knew I'd make it and I did. Never had any sex problems, either, don't worry about that. Never thought I was a fag or anything. Lost my cherry at fifteen on the beach at Far Rockaway and I've been wallowing in pussy ever since. *Wallowing* in it. You married, Wilder?"

"Yes."

"Well, maybe that takes care of it for some guys, but I'll be a son of a bitch if any broad's gonna hook me till I'm ready. What kinda work d'ya do?"

"Sales."

"Yeah? That's funny. You look smarter'n that. I always thought salesmen were slope-heads. Whaddya sell?"

"Space."

The doctor reeled away in astonishment. "Christ, isn't *any*thing free any more? You sell *space?* Which kind? Inner space or outer space? Huh?"

"I think you know what I mean," Wilder said. "Advertising space. For a magazine."

"Oh. Yeah, I get it. Advertising space. What magazine?"

"*The American Scientist*."

"No kidding? Well, that's impressive. They run some pretty abstruse, sophisticated material. If you understand that stuff you must be fairly—"

"I don't understand it. I just sell it."

"How can you sell something you don't understand?"

"Isn't that sort of what psychiatrists do?"

And that earned him another of Spivack's painful punches and a bray of laughter. "You're okay, Wilder," he said. "Anyway, I always knew I'd make it and I did. Straight A's all through college and med school, did my interneship at Johns Hopkins and came here as a resident two years ago. Internal Medicine. Thought it was an honor to work in Bel levue Hospital; family did too. And I was damned good. That's not bragging: I happen to be an excellent physician, that's all. Then, *wham!* The old administrative double-cross, and look where the hell I wind up. Talk about irony, huh?"

Wilder wanted to hear more about the old administrative double-cross but thought better of asking; and when Spivack began talking again he had changed the subject.

"Speaking of fags," he said, "you notice how this ward's crawling with 'em? Fags, junkies, fall-down drunks. Another thing: you notice all this 'Save me' talk? 'Save me, buddy,' and all that? It's supposed to be about cigarettes—they want you to save 'em the butt when you're done—but it's really kind of a half-assed prayer: you hear guys say it that don't even smoke. They want to be *saved*. Find a lot of religious nuts in here. There's one guy thinks he's the Second Coming of Christ. Probably more than one—it's a common psychotic delusion—but this guy's a riot. Keeps to himself most of the time, then once in a while he puts on a show. Stick around; you'll see him. Hey, and another thing: you notice how they only hire spades here? You know why?"

"No. Why?"

"Why d'ya think? Because they're so 'gentle' and so 'kind'? Yeah, yeah, they've got a Natural Sense of Rhythm, too. They're scared of ghosts and they're just plain crazy about watermelon. What the hell were you, born yesterday? It's because no white man'd *work* here for the kind of money they get. You know what kind of money they get? Even Charlie there? Huh?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Wilder," Charlie said, blocking their path. "Those pajamas of yours don't fit very well, do they?"

"No, I—no, they don't."

"Sometimes the night people are careless. We have Small, Medium and Large. A man of your size needs Small. I'll see about it."

"Yeah, you do that, Charlie," Spivack said, "and while you're at it why don't you see about your buddy Roscoe. I want that little bastard put on Report, is that clear? If he shoots me out one more time I'll have his nurse's license. Is that clear?"

"All right; try to keep your voice down, Doctor."

"Charlie's the only half way decent one they've got," Spivack said when they were walking again. "Know something? This fucking place was built in the Nineteenth Century and it hasn't changed a bit. Look at that." He pointed to a bench. "And you seen the benches in the messhall? Antiques! Antiques! Get some faggot antique dealer up here and he'd pay a thousand bucks apiece for 'em. Listen. Little piece of advice. Watch out for Roscoe. First morning I was in here he let me sit in my own urine for an hour and a half. An hour and a half! And mind you, this was after I'd asked him for a urinal seven times.

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Bastard kept telling me to go to the latrine, go to the latrine, go to the latrine."

"Why didn't you go?"

Spivack struck his own head with the heel of his hand in a spasm of exasperation. "You're missing the *point*, Wilder! The point is, when a patient asks a nurse for a urinal he's supposed to *get* it. Ah, Christ, I thought you showed a glimmer of intelligence, but you're just as fucking dumb as all the other fucking—look: get lost for a while, okay? My father and my sister are coming to see me tomorrow and I happen to have a few things on my mind."

So he was alone again, but it wasn't long before he had his Small pajamas, which were heartening; then he joined a group huddled in one of the padded cells whose door had been propped open. The man with the newspapers was there—he had spread part of his collection on the floor for study—and among the others were two young boys, white and Negro, who sat deep in conversation against the rear wall.

". . . So we was all fooling around this vacant lot up behind the Breyer's Ice Cream sign, see," the white boy was saying, "and see, I should of gone home when the other kids did; that's where I made my mistake. Anyways, it was getting dark and me and this Kovarsky was just kind of sitting there talking and smoking cigarettes behind the sign, and then he—"

"Hold on a second, Ralph, you goin' too fast. Who's this Kovarsky?"

"I just told you. He's this big-shot kid in the neighborhood out home; all the kids are scared of him; I mean he's, you know, real big and he talks tough and he's got a Record. Breaking and Entering. He's nineteen. Anyways, he says for me to stick around after the other kids go home and I says okay. I mean I know it was dumb but I guess I was kind of—I don't know, kind of—"

"Flattered, right?" the Negro boy said. "Sure, I can see that. So then what?"

"So then he starts giving me cigarettes and telling dirty stuff about girls, telling the names of all the girls in the Senior Class he's had innercourse with, and like that. You know."

"Yeah, shit, I know those kinda guys. How old're you, Ralph?"

"Fifteen. I mean I'm fifteen now; I was fourteen then. So anyways, all of a sudden he kind of moves in close and opens up his pants and tells me to—you know. Go down on him. Blow him."

"Jesus."

"So I tell him no and I get up quick and start to run around the sign and he makes a grab for me and says he's gonna break my arm. That don't scare me—I know he can't do nothing like that on account of his Record—but then he says 'Okay, kid, you got a choice: be nice to me and I won't tell nobody nothin'. Run on home, and I swear to God you're never gonna hear the end of this.' "

"Oh, Jesus," the Negro boy said.

"So I go home, and the next day at school all the kids start in on me. You know. 'Hey, Ralph, what's it taste like?' That kind of stuff. Dirty stuff. Or they'd grab the front of their pants and say 'Wanna go up behind the Breyer's Ice Cream sign, Ralph?' And then around the candystore they start calling me Hot Lips Volpe. That's my last name, Volpe. Even the big kids, Juniors and Seniors. Even the *girls*. 'Cause see, what he did was, this Kovarsky, what he did was, he told everybody it was *me* wanted to suck him off."

The other boy looked puzzled. "How come you didn't tell 'em the truth?"

"I did! I did! I told 'em and told 'em, and everybody just laughed. 'Cause it was just my word against his, see? And this Kovarsky's such a big shot, who's gonna believe me?"

"Mm. Man, that's a tough story."

"And then my father hears about it."

"Your father? Your father didn't believe you either?"

"Well see, he got it from the other kids' fathers. He says 'Ralph, I want you to tell me exactly what happened up behind that sign.' So I tell him and he says 'That's not the way *I* heard it,' and I says 'I *swear!* I *swear!*' He just sits there and looks at me like I'm some kind of—some kind of—I don't know. And ever since then, ever since then—" Ralph couldn't finish; he turned his face against the wall mat, wholly expressionless, and began fingering his pimples. All his fingernails had been bitten to the quick.

"Man," said the Negro boy. "I mean, that is one tough story. Hey listen, though; I got an idea. Let's play a game. Let's play pictures. You know how to play pictures, Ralph?" Ralph didn't answer. "How 'bout you, man? What's your name?"

"John."

"I'm Francis, John; this here's Ralph. You want to play pictures? It's easy. I say somethin', you all try and tell me what picture it's in. Here's an example. I say 'Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.' What picture is that?"

"Well, I guess I don't—"

"You don't know? Shit, man, that's *Gone With The Wind*. Clark Gable says it to Vivien Leigh. You want another one?"

"Okay."

"Here's another one. Wait a minute." Francis screwed up his eyes in concentration. "You got another one, Ralph?"

"No."

"You got one, John?"

"Not yet."

"Well, wait a minute. We'll think of one. Plenty of good pictures." But his downcast, brooding face had begun to suggest that there weren't plenty of them at all. "Some pictures I don't like," he said. "I don't like that *Psycho*, you know? Anthony Perkins? I mean that's a bad picture, know what I mean?"

"Mm."

"Yeah."

"Well, let's think." He thought for a while and then he said "Shit, I don't want to play pictures any more. You like music, John?"

"Sure. What kind of music?"

"Any kind. You like this?" He bunched himself into an athletic squat and began slapping his flexed thighs as if they were bongo drums; when the rhythm was established he threw back his head and closed his eyes as he sang, or rather wailed and howled, in what could have been an

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ultra-progressive style of jazz or an African tribal chant. Ralph seemed to like it: his own eyes glazed over and he wagged his head to the drumming.

"Hey," said the man with the newspapers. "Take a look at this." He had neatly torn out a sports headline from the *New York Post*: CAN MARIS TOP THE BABE? "Got that?" he said. "Well, watch, Wait." Out of his raddled sheaf came half a dozen other scraps of newsprint, which he shielded from view. "Wait," he muttered over his work, carefully tearing and smoothing and adjusting, and then "Look now," he said. "Look at there."

He had laid out a big photograph of Marilyn Monroe. The headline above it read: CAN pARIS sTOP THis BABE? And beneath it, in many different type faces, ran the caption: Tired Blood? TALK ABOUT SUMMER VALUES! *IKE VOICES 'CONCERN' AS Thousands Flee City's Heat*; F.B.I. Joins State, Local Police in Massive Effort to FLY AIR FRANCE.

"Well, that's—quite something."

"Ah, it's not a very good one. I'll do a better one. Wait."

Francis's music had grown louder and seemed to have put him in a trance. The effort of singing had brought up two gouts of phlegm from his throat but he'd caught them both without missing a beat, one on the back of each flying hand.

"Mr. Wilder?" Charlie called from the corridor. He was holding Spivack close by the upper arm either in restraint or affection, and Spivack glowered with narrow eyes, breathing so hard through his nose that his head wobbled slightly with each breath. "Mr. Wilder, Dr. Spivack would like you to join him for supper this evening."

". . . Okay, you can eat with me, Wilder," Spivack said as they filed into the stifling messhall, "but no more questions; no more fucking *talk*, is that clear?"

On Sunday morning Wilder was shot out.

It happened so quickly that he could never afterwards put it straight in his memory: there was no coherent pattern of helplessness and resentment and anger rising to rage. He'd had his breakfast and his Nourishment and his ward cigarette; he was standing alone at one of the grey windows looking out on nothing, and he heard the shouted word "Shit! . . . Shit!" before he recognized his own voice. He stepped back from the window, raised the sole of one dirty foot and slammed it against the steel-mesh grid, denting it, and the sight of that dent was so invigorating that he hauled off and slammed it again and again, making it deeper, while his raw throat burned with the cry of "*Shit! Shit! Shit!* . . ." He was only dimly aware of other voices around him—"*Watch* it, fella"; "Easy; *easy*—" and not until two orderlies grabbed his arms did he know he was in trouble. "Hey Charlie!" somebody called. "Charlie!"

And there he came, lumbering down the corridor with his face pressed into a frown. He paused under a light to squint at his upraised needle until the drop gleamed on its point; then the orderlies tore down Wilder's pants and Charlie sank the shot into one buttock. "I did warn you, Mr. Wilder," he said. "I told you to watch that temper of yours." The door of a padded cell was opened just enough for Wilder to be flung inside; it slammed shut and he heard the lock click. He couldn't breathe and it took a great deal of work to pull up his pants and secure them while scrabbling on all fours around the soft floor; then the drug went to work in him—heavy waves of sleep as deep as drowning—and the last thing he knew as he turned and floundered and sank was that nothing in his life had ever been as bad as this. This was the worst.

". . . Wilder? Hey, off your ass, man."

It could have been ten minutes or ten hours later.

"Wilder?"

"Mm? . . . What? . . ."

"Get up outa there, man. You got visitors."

Visitors.

He stumbled up the corridor like a drunk, colliding with other men, reeling against one wall for support and then against the other. Even when he found his balance he had to stop and run furtive fingers down the fly of his pants to make sure it was closed while his free hand clawed hair away from his eyes.

The messhall had been transformed into a visitors' room—tables shoved out of the way, benches hauled around in conversational groupings—and he stood blinking in the doorway for some time before discovering his wife and Paul Borg. He tried not to wobble as he sat down with them and said hello.

"Oh, this must be awful for you, John," Janice said, putting her hand on his knee. "This *place*." She looked troubled and affectionate—she had even worn what she called his favorite dress, a blue-and-brown print that emphasized her breasts—and for a second or two he could see the girl who'd made all other girls unnecessary long ago.

"Yeah. Well, how've you been? How's Tommy?"

"We're fine. Except that we miss you."

"What'd you tell him?"

"I said you'd been held over by business in Chicago."

"Well, but the trouble is you can't possibly say when I'll be back. I won't even see a doctor till Thursday, and God only knows what'll happen after that. Might be two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, and I mean whaddya gonna *tell* him?"

"Sh-sh." She squeezed his knee. "Why don't you let me worry about Tommy? He'll be fine; I promise. You just concentrate on getting rested and getting well."

"And I can't even call him because there's no phone here. Look; you better call the office Tuesday, tell George I've got the flu or something."

"Oh, of course, dear. That's no problem."

Paul Borg had been gazing around at other patients as if trying to assess the degree of insanity in each case; then he turned the same cool scrutiny on Wilder for an instant before they both lowered their eyes, and that was when Wilder saw a carton of cigarettes on Borg's lap.

"Jesus, are those for me? Can I have 'em?"

". . . One thing I still fail to understand," Borg was saying, "is this nuisance about the Labor Day Weekend."

"Yeah."

"An institution of this size; a public institution; surely it's reasonable to expect at least a partial psychiatric staff to be on duty over the holidays."

"Yeah; sure is." With a cigarette in his mouth, a pack in

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his pocket and a carton under his arm he was ready to forgive anybody for anything.

At the end of visiting hour they went out into the pressing, overheated crowd near the front door. Borg shook his hand and Janice put her arms around him to kiss him goodbye. "John?" she said. "You know what I thought we might do? When you do come home? I thought we might drive up to the country with Tommy—he can skip a few days of school—and just relax and be together and have a little vacation. Maybe a whole week. How does that sound?"

"Sounds fine. I—yeah, that sounds fine."

And the door was locked behind them.

"Hey, save me, buddy, okay?"

"Save me, man."

"Save me . . ."

He was the center of attention, passing out cigarettes, until Charlie said "Mr. Wilder? Will you come with me, please?" and led him to the KEEP OUT room. "That carton won't last very long if you carry it around," he said. "What we generally do when a man gets a carton, we keep it for him in here. I'll write your name on it." And while writing he said "Was that lady your wife, Mr. Wilder?"

"Yes."

"A very nice-looking lady; very well dressed. You have children? . . . Well, that's fine; a son. I have three little girls, myself," he said when they were back in the corridor. "Seven, eight, and nine years old. They're the joy of my life."

"All right, how d'ya like *that*, Charlie?" Spivack demanded. "Explain *that* to me if you're so fucking smart."

"Explain what, Doctor?"

"What the hell d'ya think? My father and my sister. I gave 'em every chance. I waited at that God damned door for a solid hour and neither *one* of 'em showed up. You know what *I* think?" His eyes were as wild as when he'd been shot out for shadow-boxing. Charlie laid one hand around his shoulder as if to guide him away for a private talk, but he held his ground. "You know what *I* think? That jerk-off spook of a husband of hers's got 'em *both* by the short hairs. He's got 'em *both* convinced I'm a dangerous lunatic and they've written me off! They're gonna let me *rot* in here!"

"Oh, now, I imagine there's any number of reasons why they couldn't make it today, Doctor. One thing, you have to remember your father's getting on in years and it's a long trip for him, all the way down from White Plains. Your sister has her family to look after, and she's probably—"

"Charlie, you're a great big chocolate sweetheart but you don't know shit about human nature. Even a dumb little asshole like *Wilder* knows more'n you. Gimme your pen."

"I don't believe I'll give you anything, Doctor, until you apologize to Mr. Wilder and to me. For your language."

"Ah, Jesus fucking Christ. Language. Apologize. All right, all right, I apologize. Let's try it this way. Nurse, would you please be so kind as to lend me your invaluable twenty-nine-cent ballpoint pen for approximately twelve seconds?" He tore a dirty scrap of paper from his pajama pocket, held it flat against the wall and wrote a set of numerals. "Here. Now listen carefully. This is my sister's phone number. When you get off work tonight I want you to call this number and give her the following message. Tell her—"

But Charlie was shaking his head. "You know I can't do anything like that."

Spivack backed away three steps and stood there—legs apart, fists clenched and eyes blazing. "So what the hell *can* you do? Smile? Preach? Make everybody's ass feel good? What the hell *can* you do, you big, dumb, motherfucking—"

"Doctor!"

"Yeah, 'Doctor.' Shit. Why don'tcha just shoot me out and get it over with?"

"I've considered that," Charlie said, "but I believe you're playing games with me. You know I don't play games. What's more, you've taken up too much of my time. There are a good many other patients on this ward besides yourself." He turned and walked away into one of the shuffling columns, soon surrounded by other talking, favor-seeking men. Spivack slumped alone against the wall, and that gave Wilder a chance for escape.

He ducked quickly into the latrine. He had a comb in his pocket now—another gift from Paul Borg—so he dampened his head and restored it to the carefully casual shape of everyday: a clean part on the left, short front hairs combed sideways across the brow, longer side hairs back and down. It was a style he had copied from the actor Alan Ladd after years of experimentation, and it looked all right. He had to admit, studying himself from several angles in the dim, white- and red-flecked mirror, that this was a sound, manly, reliable face. Troubled, maybe, but not openly neurotic and certainly not mentally ill. It was nothing less than absurd for him to be here, in the Men's Violence Ward, and the absurdity made him toss his head with a wry, amused little smile.

"Hey, what the hell you doin', man?" said a voice behind him. "You tryna look pretty for yourself?"

". . . I mean it may be understandable in my sister's case," Spivack said, coming up beside him in the supper line. "She lets that slippery bastard *fuck* her every night. He works the old cock up in there and shoves it around till she screams, and I guess you can't blame her for believing all the Sigmund Freud horseshit he gives her in the daytime. But my father; that's something else. *And* my brothers. They're intelligent men! They're medical men! They *know* I was railroaded in here on some half-assed, trumped-up charge of—ah, never mind. Let's go eat up our goody-good macaroni and cheese."

One of the new patients brought in on Monday—or was it Tuesday?—was a grey-haired Negro so badly injured around the head and face that blood-stained bandages covered his eyes. They couldn't make a blind man walk, so his bunk stayed down and he lay on it all day as the column on that side of the corridor detoured around him. Wilder passed him twice before noticing that his wrists and ankles were secured to the bunk by heavy restraining bands. He writhed constantly, groaning and muttering; several times he struggled up to a half-sitting position and screamed.

"D.t.'s," Spivack explained.

"How can you tell?"

"Obvious. Anyone with medical training can spot 'em. Lot of the drunks in here have 'em all the time. Hear what he was yelling just now? When Charlie went over to him?"

"No."

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" 'Ah! Ah! Ah got lucidations! Ah got lucidations!' Didn't you hear that? He means hallucinations. Bastard's been soaking up a quart a day for twenty-five years and now his brains have turned to shit. You drink, Wilder?"

"Some."

"How much? Four, five, six drinks a day?"

"I don't know."

"Eight? Ten? Fifteen? More'n that? Huh?"

"Look, Spivack: in the first place I don't think it's any of your fucking—"

"Wow! Boy! Talk about hitting a *sore* spot—so *that's* your trouble. Well, it figures: you do look like a lush; funny I didn't notice before."

"Yeah; funny," Wilder said. "Fuck you."

And Spivack's reply was to thrust a triumphant middle-finger high in the air and say "Fuck *you*" as he turned and disappeared into the column of walkers.

For the rest of that day—Tuesday?—they avoided each other. Wilder tried to renew his acquaintance with Ralph and Francis, but Ralph didn't seem to recognize him and Francis didn't want to play pictures even when Wilder fed him a good one—"Hey, what picture is this: 'Play it again, Sam?' "

He helped the newspaper man lay out a spread that didn't work at all, and after that he kept to himself, walking the corridor, peering at his double image in the cop's sunglasses, smoking cigarettes and saving people, wondering in a quiet panic if he really might be out of his mind.

But sometime during the next afternoon he heard the blind man saying "Oh! Oh! Oh!" and found Spivack crouching low over the man's bunk.

"What's the matter, Sambo?" Spivack inquired softly. "You got them old lucidations again? You want a drink? Well, I'm afraid that's tough, Sambo, because we don't got no drinks in here."

". . . Oh! Oh! Oh! . . ."

"No, we don't got nothin' here but Peraldehyde and straitjackets and shots in the ass and . . ."

"Why don't you cut that shit out," Wilder said.

Spivack straightened his spine and turned around in a great display of surprise. "Well, I'll be God damned." His gaze ran from Wilder's eyes to his bare feet and back again. "Look who's preaching at me now. I thought I'd taken just about every kind of holy-Joe shit there is, from every kind of fool; and now some pipsqueak, some drunken little salesman starts telling me 'kindess,' starts telling me 'compassion,' starts telling me—"

"You're an arrogant, insolent, overbearing son of a bitch, Spivack. You're a prick . . ." Wilder walked backwards, letting Spivack advance on him, but it wasn't a retreat; he was withdrawing to a wider part of the corridor where the crowd was thin and he could take a stand.

"And whaddya think *you* are? Some Boy Scout? Some faggot social worker? Some saint? Christ himself? Huh?"

They both stopped, three feet apart, glaring fiercely and ready for anything. Neither of them took up a fighting stance—their hands hung loose—but Wilder squared his shoulders and said "How'd you like a punch in the mouth, Spivack?"

"From you? Funny little alcoholic creep? Shit; I'd wipe up the floor with you in five seconds and you know it."

"Don't be too fucking sure of that, Spivack."

"Wanna try it? See what happens?"

Then the KEEP OUT door swung open and Charlie was smiling there, happy with welcome. "Gentlemen?" he said. "Would you care to join me for a cup of coffee?"

Going about the cordial business of arranging chairs for them and measuring out instant coffee while the pan of water bubbled on the hotplate, he seemed unaware of their red, hard-breathing faces and trembling limbs. "I generally enjoy a little coffee at this time of the day," he said, "and once in a while it's nice to have company. If you don't mind I think I'll just shut that door. Makes the air a little close in here, but I don't want to give the impression I'm holding open house. Sugar and cream, Mr. Wilder?"

"Yes, please."

"It's only a powdered cream-substitute, of course, but it's very tasty. You, Doctor?"

"No, thanks. Black."

At first Charlie did all the talking as they sat and sipped and smoked in this unaccustomed luxury. Wilder kept waiting for his monologue to turn into a lecture (" . . . Now, I don't want to see any more trouble between you two . . .") but it didn't, and soon they were able to relax. They could even exchange bashful, half-smiling glances of complicity, like bad little boys who'd managed to raise hell without getting caught.

". . . Well, I'm certainly glad the holiday's over," he was saying. "These long weekends are always difficult. We get badly overcrowded; we don't have an adequate staff; it's good to have the psychiatrists back. Oh, now, never mind, Doctor, I know *your* opinion of psychiatrists; we needn't go into that. All I mean is, from my point of view, it's good to have them back because they make decisions. Some of the men here have to go home to their families, right? Some have to be sent to alcoholic or narcotic facilities, some have to be sent up to Wingdale or Rockland or wherever, and some—well, it's no secret—some have to go to criminal court. And I mean, those decisions have to be made, right?"

Spivack frowned over the careful stubbing-out of his cigarette. "Charlie," he said, "will you tell me the truth?"

"I'll do my best."

"Who was it—which of these big decision-makers of yours—exactly which one of them told you I was a paranoid schizophrenic?"

And Charlie leaned back for a delighted peal of laughter, placing one great white shoe on the edge of the table. "Ah, Doctor, you tickle me. It wasn't *any* of 'em. It was you yourself! You came out of an interview—what was it, two, three weeks ago?—and you said 'Better watch out for me, Charlie, I'm a paranoid schizophrenic.' It was you yourself told me!"

But Spivack was not amused.

When Charlie's laughter dwindled he put both feet on the floor and leaned earnestly forward. "I do know one thing, though, Doctor. Mind you, this isn't criticism, but I imagine every time you see those psychiatrists you go in with a negative attitude. I imagine you tell them about filing your malpractice suit and so on, and of course that's understandable. You're a physician too and you've been placed in

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a difficult situation here. All I mean to suggest is this: why don't you surprise them next time? Walk in there and answer their questions, make a good appearance, show a little sense of humor, let them see the kind of rational, agreeable man you *are* most of the time; the kind of man you are with me, or with Mr. Wilder here?"

"Yeah, yeah, okay," Spivack said. "I'll turn on the old charm. Hey, here, I forgot to give your pen back." He unclipped it from his pajama pocket and slid it across the table. "Don't suppose you've got an envelope, do you, Charlie?"

"An envelope? No."

"Doesn't matter. Even if I had an envelope I'd still need a stamp. Thing is, I wrote a letter to my sister. Want to read it?"

"Oh, I'd rather not, Doctor, if you don't mind; I don't really enjoy reading other people's personal—"

The door shuddered with pounding and a voice called "Charlie! There's a turd on the floor! Some son of a bitch dropped a *turd* on the floor . . ."

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said as he escorted them quickly back into the corridor. "I'll have to lock up here. It's been a pleasure."

Would there now be a resumption of their fight? Evidently not. Spivack walked moodily but not angrily, and soon he made shy, tentative efforts at conversation. "*There* goes a Wingdale man," he said as they passed a muscular, dull-eyed Puerto Rican wearing work clothes: high-top shoes, denim shirt, green twill pants with wide, old-fashioned suspenders. "When they dress 'em up that way it's Wingdale every time. And oh Jesus, look at that."

A very old white man stood crying like an infant—"Wah! Wah! Wah!"—as an orderly approached him with a straitjacket. He twisted away and tried feebly to escape; in the tussle his pajama pants fell and revealed genitals so shrivelled and small that they might have been an infant's too, and he clutched them either in shame or anxiety.

"Hey there, sexpot," Spivack said in passing.

"Save me, buddy," the shuffling men were saying of their cigarettes, "Save me . . ."

"Yeah, yeah, we'll save you. Hey, look, Wilder: there isn't a soul in Jerk-Off City. Want to sit down?" And they sank onto the stained mattresses. "Want to read my letter? I mean I worked like a bastard on it; seems like *some*body ought to read the damn thing."

"Okay; sure." He accepted the smudged, much-folded sheet of paper and opened it.

Dear Sis; dear Miss Priss:

If you are languorously glancing through The New Yorker and sipping an ever-so-extra-dry martini when you receive this letter, or if you are changing from a terribly sweet little cocktail dress into something svelte and provocative for evening, or if you are dabbing a delightfully subtle Parisian scent at your throat in preparation for prolonged and exquisite dalliance with your husband tonight, then don't bother to read it. Drop it among the crushed gardenias and the empty Liebfraumilch bottles and the Tiffany invitations to parties you've chosen not to attend.

If, however, this letter finds you on your knees in your dungarees scrubbing the kitchen floor, or scouring a pot so badly encrusted with last Saturday's Boeuf Bourguignon that your fingers bleed into the Brillo, or better still sitting and grunting and raising a stink on what I believe your husband calls the "john," then read the hell out of it, baby. This is important. This is reality.

1.—Call Dad.

2.—Call Eric and Mark.

3.—Tell your husband he is a simpering, pretentious little fool.

4.—GET ME OUT OF HERE.

Henry

"So whaddya think?" he asked.

"Well, it's pretty funny, but the general tone does seem a little—"

" 'Hostile,' right? That's every psychiatrist's favorite word."

"I wasn't going to say that; I just mean it seems a little on the self-defeating side. Doesn't seem very likely to accomplish its purpose."

Spivack sighed and stuffed it back into his pajamas. "Ah, I guess you're right. Purely an academic question anyway. Haven't got an envelope; haven't got a stamp."

Wilder's name was called on Thursday morning. He stood by the cop at the door, combing and recombing his hair while Spivack gave him last-minute counsel.

"It's an inquisition. They ask you questions—loaded questions, the kind that'd never stand up in a court of law—and when you answer they don't listen to you: they listen *at* you. They let everything you say slide past and hang in the air while they study it. Because it's not the substance they care about, it's the style. You can almost *see* them thinking 'Mm; interesting. Why did he make that slip? Why that particular choice of words? Oh, and they watch you like hawks, too. Not just your face—it's very important to keep a straight face and look 'em in the eyes—but everything. Squirm around in your chair, cross your legs, put your hand up to your head or anything like that and you're dead."

"Okay, Wilder," an orderly said. "Let's go."

There may have been less than a dozen white-coated men in the interview room but there seemed to be twice that many. They sat row on row in chairs with writing-panel armrests, like students, and Wilder faced them alone in an ordinary chair with his sweating hands on his thighs, as if he were their teacher. Nobody smiled. A bald, heavy man in the front row cleared his throat and said "Well. What seems to be the trouble?"

It probably lasted a quarter of an hour. First he did his best to tell them about the business trip to Chicago, about the week of insomnia and heavy drinking, about Paul Borg and St. Vincent's and the poorly-remembered events that had brought him here.

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Then came the questions. Had Wilder ever been in a mental hospital before? Had he ever been under psychiatric care? Had he ever sought treatment for alcoholism? Had his drinking ever gotten him into trouble? With an employer? With his family? With the police?

No, he kept saying, no; no; no—and through it all he held his face straight, sat still and didn't gesticulate. But after the questions they stared in silence; they seemed to expect him to make a summing-up in his own defense, and that was when everything went to hell. One hand leaped to his wet brow and clung there. "Look" he said. "Listen: I know if I say 'I'm not crazy' it'll probably just convince you I am; but even so, that's my—that's my position." The hand fell back to his thigh, but he knew he was squirming because he heard his chair creak. "I *don't* think I'm crazy, or mentally ill or emotionally disturbed or whatever the hell, I mean whatever you people call it." His mouth was so dry he could feel every movement of tongue and teeth and lips in their laborious effort to form speech. "I know I was behaving erratically or whaddyacallit, irrationally last Friday, but that was last Friday. After the first couple of nights' sleep and the first few doses of formaldehyde, I mean *you* know, Peraldehyde, I think I was all right again, and I'm all right now; so the point is—Christ's *sake*, is anybody *listening*?" The spastic hand flew to his head again, messing up his hair, and his eyes closed to shut out their faces.

"What makes you think nobody's listening?"

"Because I've been locked up in a God-damned—because this place is enough to drive anybody out of their—I don't know." He opened his eyes, but nothing could be done about his hand. "Look. Listen: I don't think I belong here any more and I think I ought to be discharged. That's all I've got to say."

He was reminded again of a classroom—this time of one whose students are embarrassed because their teacher has made a fool of himself—so his face twitched into an apologetic little grimace and he said what teachers often say at such moments: "Are there any—questions?"

"Okay, Wilder," said the orderly, and he was escorted back and locked into the ward, where he wanted to smash his fist against the wall or scream or kick a window again with his filthy foot. Instead he walked and smoked, promising to save people.

"How'd it go?" Spivack inquired.

"Shit, I don't know."

"Slimy bunch of bastards, aren't they? Make your flesh crawl. And when you think of the *power* those fish-eyed fuckers have over a man's life—I mean talk about your F.B.I.; talk about your C.I.A.; talk about your Nazi Secret Police . . ."

But an hour later Charlie beckoned him aside for a hushed, private talk near the KEEP OUT door. "You did very well in there, Mr. Wilder."

"I what? I did? How do you know?"

"Well, now, never mind; I just happen to know you gave a good account of yourself. Matter of fact I understand they'll be taking you down to Rehabilitation after lunch. It's very nice there, very clean; they seldom keep a man more than twenty-four hours. Give you a little counseling, finish up your paperwork, get your clothes and you're free to go. But look: it's a busy day and I may not see you again, so I'll just say goodbye and wish you well—" he held out a big hand to shake—"and another thing. I think it's very nice the way you've been so friendly with Dr. Spivack; talking with him, taking your meals with him. Dr. Spivack didn't really have any friends here till you came. He's a fine man, as you know; only trouble is he's a little—disturbed. Well. Good luck, sir."

"Thanks. Thanks, Charlie."

And he watched him move away to bear down on the beautiful boy in the turban. "Gail! Now Gail, how many times have I told you to take that pajama-top off your head? And put your penis back in your pants where it belongs. Nobody wants to look at that thing."

They called six or eight men to stand by the front door after lunch, and Wilder was among them.

"Well look at you," Spivack said, advancing on him. "Wudga do in there, anyway? Bribe 'em? Blackmail 'em? Crawl around and kiss their asses? Hey, wait a second. Got something for you." And he probed in his pajama pocket, to which Charlie's pen was clipped.

"What's this? Another letter?"

"No, shitface. My address and phone number. If I ever do get outa here I might buy you a drink sometime."

"Well, that's very—sure; thanks."

"So here's the pen: wanna give me yours?"

And Wilder did so. "I'll look forward to it, Spivack," he said.

"Yeah, well, don't hold your breath. I may forget your fucking existence in an hour and a half. Anyway, keep a tight asshole, Wilder."

"I'll try. You too."

The door opened, not to let the men out but to admit an elderly female nurse trailed by a dozen very young girls in fresh blue-and-white striped smocks and white stockings.

"My God," Spivack said. "Student nurses. Beautiful little student nurses on a training tour." He stepped back into the corridor and stood with his arms flung wide, like a master of ceremonies. "Girls, I'm delighted to see you. It's nonsense for them to send you up here because once you graduate you'll never get near this place, but even so you might learn something—oh, it's all right, Nurse," he said to their leader, who seemed to have been stricken dumb. "I'm a staff physician; I can handle this. Girls, what we have here is a relic of the Nineteenth Century. This isn't a 'psychiatric ward,' you see; it's a madhouse . . ."

Some of the girls looked bewildered and a few looked scared, but most had begun to giggle behind their hands to show they found Spivack "cute".

"Officer," the nurse was saying to the cop, "who's the charge nurse on this ward?"

"His name's Charlie, Ma'am. I can't leave the door, but I'll send somebody to get him—just a second. Hey, uh—"

". . . We have psychopathic criminals here, girls, and we have men in advanced stages of madness caused by venereal disease and alcohol and drugs, and we have at least one Second Coming of Christ; then we have men who don't belong here at all. Take my own case: I'm what you might call a political prisoner. Hospital politics, that is; medical politics. I don't suppose they teach you girls about medical

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politics, but I really think they should because believe me it's a very real, very treacherous—"

"Doctor!" Charlie came loping up the corridor in a swarm of laughing men. "Doctor, I want you to leave those girls alone . . ."

The door opened again to let Wilder's group out, and then it was locked behind them.

Rehabilitation was very nice and clean indeed: real beds, chrome-and-leatherette armchairs, good showers with soap and a kind of shampoo guaranteed to remove lice. The talk was quiet and most of it courteous: nobody wanted to make trouble.

"Counseling", the next day, meant being taken into a roomful of cluttered typewriter desks—it might have been a State Unemployment Office—and sitting down beside a pale man who looked like an underpaid clerk but was said to be a psychiatric social worker.

". . . And you'll be seeking psychotherapy after your release, right?"

"Well, I don't know; I haven't really thought about it."

The interviewer stopped typing, closed his eyes and ran pale fingers over his face. "You know something? I don't understand some of you people. You're a mature, well-employed man with family responsibilities. You spend a week as an involuntary patient in the tightest lock-up in the city and you 'haven't really thought about it.' "

"Okay; I will, then."

"You damn sure better, mister. Now. Can you afford private care, or do you want to apply for out-patient treatment here?"

"Private care."

"What about your drinking? You gonna quit?"

"Frankly, I think that's my own—well, look: if you're filling out a form there, just write 'Yes.' That'll take care of it."

"Oh, you *are* a little wise guy, aren'tcha? I don't know; I don't know. Some of you people." He finished typing, ripped the forms from the machine and tore out the carbon-paper; then he stapled them, banged them angrily in several places with a rubber stamp, and the business seemed concluded.

"Can I get my clothes now?"

"You're kidding. You've gotta be kidding. You think the City of New York's just gonna let you walk outa here, after the way you came in? You can be discharged," he said, "only in the custody of Mr. Paul R. Borg; only after he has personally met and talked with me, and *only* if he agrees to sign these papers." He reached for his phone. "Now you go back inside and wait. I'm tired of your face."

It didn't take very long. Paul Borg came walking into Rehabilitation with an anxious smile, carrying a mimeographed slip. He had signed the discharge papers, he said; this was the one for the clothes. "It says Room 3-F. You know where that is?"

They found it only after walking down wrong corridors, taking wrong elevators and asking directions of people who didn't speak English; and when Wilder was dressed (an incredible pleasure: his own clothes and shoes, his own wristwatch and walletful of money) he said "Listen, Paul. Something I've got to do. Got to find the canteen, or the gift-shop or whatever they call it."

"Why?"

"Never mind. Come on. Must be on the ground floor." It was, and Wilder bought a carton of Pall Malls. With his own pen he wrote "For Charlie with many thanks," and signed his name. "Now," he said. "Where's the Psycho elelvator?"

"John, what *is* this?"

"Never mind. It's important."

" 'Men's Violence Ward?' " said the puzzled elevator man. "Ain't no ward by that name."

"Well, that may not be the official name," Wilder said, "but it's the men's ward on the seventh floor."

"Can't take you up there anyway. Ain't no visiting hour today."

"I'm not a visitor, I'm a—well, look. Just take this up to the ward, give it to the cop at the door and tell him it's for Charlie. Will you do that?"

"Oh. Sure, okay." And the door slid shut.

"Son of a bitch'll keep 'em for himself," Wilder said, "or else he'll give 'em to the cop and the *cop*'ll keep 'em. I should've insisted on going up. I should've *demanded* to go up."

"John, it doesn't matter. Can't you see it doesn't matter?"

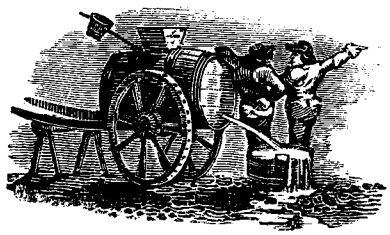
"It does matter. Some things *matter*, that's all."

But at last they found their way through corridors and waiting rooms and doors into the abrupt, fresh air of First Avenue, and Wilder said "Wow." Then he said "My God."

It was mid-afternoon on a fine September day, and nothing had ever smelled so sweet. Tall buildings rose in a deep blue sky and pigeons wheeled and sailed among them; clean cars and taxicabs sped uptown bearing sane, unfettered people to the sane, unfettered business of the world.

"I'm parked right around the corner," Borg said as they walked. "Have you home in no time at all. John? What's the trouble now?"

Wilder had stopped to read a torn scrap of paper from his pocket: *Henry J. Spivack, M. D.*, with an address and phone number lettered underneath. "Nothing," he said, and let it flutter from his hand to the dirty street. "It's nothing. It doesn't matter." □



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DAVID LYON

SONG TO PRAISE THE COMING SEASON

To mourn things in their season is good.
The country man knows
the turned side of love is to kill
love and let it go in the recall
of seed to soil to plant to seed
to soil again.

A man knows his sons
as other men in his line.
Sons give way to sons,
rising to till the soil
and falling back in it in time.
He will never know his daughters
half so well.

Their bodies shine like green corn
in the half-light of dusk.
They sing in the wind
around the full-corded vines
and untuned reeds of broadleafed grain.
The skin of daughters gleams
in harvest-time
with the promise of blood and seed.

I turn again to walk the hillside planting
in the passion of the year, and see
the quickening daimons of the air
strike fire in the body of the field.
Step on step of the turned-earth stair
ascends the height of the furrows
to the border of the land and the sky
and the woman walking down the rows.

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Annie Dillard:

Five Sketches

JESUS IN WATERCOLOR

Jesus in watercolor all over the walls, and we're sitting around in a circle, saying dimly with Samuel, "Here am I" . . . Jesus thin as a film of tinted water, people lying indolent about in pastel clothes, shepherd boys, women with clear, round faces, Lake Gennesaret, the Sea of Galilee — I know watercolor. You can see the paper through it. That Mediterranean sun casts no shadows, bleaches, dissolves. . .

But if I am eight years old, I still know weather, and a thing about shade. When my father picks me up afterwards he still hasn't shaved. He acts silly for me, and makes me laugh. The upholstery smells; the satin lining of my fancy winter coat is cool on my arms. I can throw a baseball where I want it, and catch it when it comes. Those arms know something about weight and depth, force and the way things fall. I don't know anything yet about Jesus, but I know, as the artist doesn't, about the light that shines full on the ball but never *through* it: the leather ball, opaque, with raised red stitching at the seam.

GOD AND THE DEAF-MUTE

Once there was an American boy who was a deaf-mute. His eyesight was not extra sharp; and he couldn't say a thing. He ran around in the woods and fields all alone, and he went to a special school.

He could jump very high, so he went to track meets, and won every time. He went to a big university, and all he did was jump in the fields and in the woods. He could barely read and write, and he didn't know anybody and nobody knew him. They sent him to the Olympics, and he won: he jumped 7 feet, 8 inches.

After he got the gold medal he was famous. A reporter from a sports magazine came to the woods with a magic slate and found him. The reporter wrote on the magic slate: "Why do you jump so high?" The boy erased the slate and took a long time writing his answer, which was, "Whoopee!"

MELODY

In that little club, a certain song was the favorite. The singer, a farmer's daughter in a red dress, who gradually relaxed as she saw that no one meant to harm her—she, the tired little singer with the shy, wide smile, would sing it for us, night after night. I never heard the song before. It was at once full of wanderlust and nostalgia, a sense of the tenderness of the past and the promise, altogether vivid, of the glory and love of the future. Its melody was simple, rising and falling.

I remember little else about that time. I know I thought then that whenever I should hear that particular song again —whenever any of us would hear it again, at no matter what time, on whatever continent—we would recall again that summer, and the club, and what we did there, and the little singer in the red dress. I don't know about the others. I've never heard the song since. Sometimes, reviewing my life, I remember those circumstances, and, if I can remember the tune, whistle it to myself, and repeat some of the words in my mind, to remember.

ANNIE DILLARD's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek *was recently awarded the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction. She will be teaching at Washington State (Bellingham) this fall.*

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HE ALWAYS WANTED A LITTLE BROTHER

He had always wanted a little brother. His parents—great planners—decided to surprise him for his twenty-first birthday. When he was five, they conceived a child. Fortunately, it came out a boy.

They *hid* it from him and raised the boy in secret. They were always throwing the kid under the bed, hustling the high chair into the closet, denying that they heard anyone shooting marbles in the attic.

Finally the great day arrived. They tied a bow around the boy's neck and presented him to his brother, now a young adult. "Just what I always wanted," said the birthday boy. "Shucks," said the younger brother, who was then sixteen.

ONCE OLD LADY SCHOOLTEACHER

Once there was an old, old schoolteacher who taught the second grade and supervised them on the playground. She had become an elementary teacher because when she was a young woman she experienced a disproportionate share of disappointment and grief, which had left her, unaccountably, with a great passion for the changing seasons, and little else.

As a teacher, then, she required of her second-graders an enormous array of seasonal signs, to which she herself contributed enthusiastically. It was a wonder there was a plant left in the neighborhood. The classroom was overrun in the fall with milkweed pods, acorns, squashes, Indian corn, and a forest of red and yellow leaves, Scotch-taped to the walls, which turned brown and buckled before Thanksgiving.

In the winter there were bare branches on her desk and in the windows, moth cocoons in mason jars, paper snowflakes on the walls. In the spring it was forsythia and pussy willow, bird's eggs and cut-paper tulips.

Her students liked her, and more than one was seized, years later, with a compelling impulse to cut pictures of turkeys out of magazines, to dig up all the crocuses and put them in a shoebox.

When this teacher was dying, it was September. She lay in bed and her younger sister waited with her. For several days before she died, the younger sister reported, the old teacher would sing, at unexpected times, in a thin, cheerful voice, this little song:

Go in and out the window,
Go in and out the window,
Go in and out the window,
As we have done before.

□

JUDITH PYNCHON

ONE KIND, ANYWAY

Death is the vicar
with a rug over his knees
in a white-walled, white-floored room:
white, but firelight-softened
so that walls, floor, vicar,
look quilted with light.

There are teacups too
on an embroidered iron cart,
exquisitely knotted,
and a sham server
at that. And a cat:
haunting another room;
or not a cat but a woolly cloud.

I wait, cross-stitched in my place,
for the cat to pad in,
and leap on the vicar's knees
to settle herself, all threads
secure. The fire unwinds;
all is domestic, cosy, pat.

In novels, death is quick or
violent, or lingering, or final,
but patterned words have not prepared me
for this charity smile,
this offer of a chair near the fire,
a cup of tea, and a chat,

nor for the cat.

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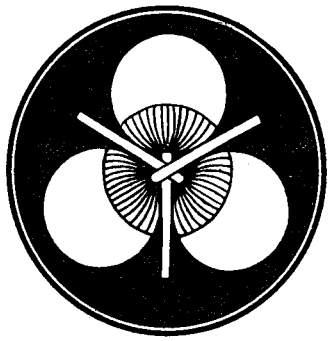
A LOT OF IT GOING AROUND:



PROSE SESTINA #2
BY M. MARKS

1.

In this version, we arrive back in town after say six months and go driving through the rain to visit Alan, planning to spend the evening with his family, maybe go out to a movie together. But there is something wrong with him. He is ill at ease, disturbed. He seems a ghost

of his former self; physically, yes, but also in terms of some personality element, a sense of presence. Alan was always calm, supportive, the logical one. Now there is a terrible electricity

crackling around him, spreading his unease to us. He likes us, he's glad to see us, he's trying his best, all this is clear, but there's something askew, he doesn't get the forms quite right. We wonder if he's been on speed

or something, but he denies it. No, there's something else, some strain in the air, some ill of the time. Everyone knows this bad cycle will drain

our powers, waste off the energy we once thought we had put together for good. Is it happening everywhere, we ask him, is it something we could try to stop? Go ahead, he says, give it a try, it's all very well for you to talk but don't count me in, I'm still exhausted

from the last campaign. I always wonder if it's really worth it. Cheer up old boy, times are changing.

M. MARKS describes himself as a "dropout" from the graduate school at the University of Chicago, and edits fiction for the Chicago Review

2.

Alan's wife returns from changing

the baby's diaper. She is pale as a ghost.

Come see!, she is crying. She shows us, the baby has been bitten by a rat. Alan curses. He's ready to go down to the landlord's office and take things into his own hands, having exhausted

all legal remedy. This is part of a train of abuse and neglect designed to drive Alan away, because the landlord doesn't want organizers upsetting his way of business. The electricity

works only sporadically, the bathroom drain

is always clogged, the halls and stairs go moldy all through the rainy season, and worst of all there are the rats and roaches. Soon of course they will move out, for the baby's sake. The Tenants' Union has gotten a court order, but it doesn't seem to have any teeth; there is room in its language for the landlord to take his own sweet time and still not violate the terms of "all deliberate speed".

3.

We speed

down to the hospital with the baby. Alan is like a maniac, zooming right up behind other cars, changing

lanes without looking, running stop signs. He blows the horn constantly; he plunges right through the deepest puddles. Finally we are at the emergency room. There follows now an hour of agonizing depression and tension. (Or so the old story goes.) This is the free clinic; we have to watch birth control movies in the waiting room. The doctor comes out at last: the baby will lose an eye but will live. We don't feel comfortable in this situation; we like them and we're glad we could help them at a time like this, yes; but in truth if we had known what was to happen we never would have stopped to see them. There is another version, in which it is clear from the start that we are Alan's enemies. We will begin with minor pranks. We sneak up outside his beautiful new house and drain

the gas from his car. We howl and rattle chains to start him wondering whether there is a ghost

in his attic. We interrupt his electricity

when he wants to watch television, when he wants to cook a meal, when he wants to use his air conditioner, when he wants to show home movies to his new friends, when he wants to read at night. Though Alan is less of the reading

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type in this version. We know that the first step toward defeating him is to make him exhausted.

4.

When we have exhausted

this little bag of tricks we turn to more serious measures. The emphasis now will be not on speed

but on effectiveness. At our first meeting after reaching this stage there is a thrilling electricity

in the air as we contribute ideas to the master plan. Our next steps must be aimed at disorienting him from his identity. This involves changing

the locks on his doors one day, repainting his house the next, etc. We substitute the documents in his wallet. We give his son blue eyes; alter his floor plan; move him to another subdivision. We station a miniature thunderstorm over his head wherever he goes, so that he arrives at work soaked each day and eventually loses his job. Soon he gives up the ghost.

Someone well up in the hierarchy takes over Alan's last role. Many of the rest of us shuffle around according to taste, vacancy, and opportunity. Changes sought are not always socially upward, you understand, we are not grossly materialistic—there was one, for example, who took the subway conductor slot because it carried with it a wife who was a sexual wizard; another rejected a chance at world-renowned scientist because he would have a serious stutter—but all the same, you should have seen the blood drain

5.

from Alan's face when he saw his cards. For this cycle he is to be old, uneducated, out of work, physically handicapped, and given an under-two-percent access to memories of the game and its rules. But he has gained a quiet strong will and a streak of good luck. Also he is now white. As for me, I appear to have gained the right to use the word "I" and parentheses, the right to use people's secret names in direct address, a few additional percentage points of access to memory of the rules and the chance to drain

up to another six points from unwary victims. I have lost much of my stamina, will be easily exhausted,

and will have to drop out earlier each day; this is a fairly serious problem. I have lost the ability to recognize ghost

characters at first sight, but this is not so bad; this condition only causes one to waste time and feel a little foolish upon discovering the mistake. Most important among my losses is that the increase in access to memory has been coupled with a strong tendency to disbelieve these memories. I will sometimes brush them off as strange imaginings, unusual fancies. This means that I may not act with sufficient speed

when opportunities arise. I've heard tell of those who received a condition like this (but much stronger than my own, I'm sure), missed several cycles, and got frozen in one real life. In externals (ostensibles we used to call them) (you can see I am enjoying parentheses while I have them. Also I seem to be stretching out this interim. I rather enjoy interims, though I know there are those who do not. True, one's body-image feels wretchedly ill, and the sudden total recall granted for the interim is frequently shocking to those who had low access to memory during the cycle (especially if they enjoyed their "life". They may reject the knowledge and try to break back to a real world out of phase; the superintendent calls them schizophrenics and locks them up). But I take pleasure in the respite, the review; and I usually have a high enough access during the cycle, I know generally what is going on, so that the hundred percent access of the interim does not jolt me too much— rather I wallow in it) in externals, yes, or ostensibles I was saying, I will for this next time move from established research physicist to graduate student somewhere in the humanities, I don't feel exactly where yet. I will still be male. The body will be taller with weaker eyesight, and a tendency to heart disease. My sense of humor will be diminished, my intellectual strength increased. I will be able to give women significantly better orgasms but will obtain somewhat slighter ones myself. My speech is more colloquial. My reading rate is improved and I am accident prone. Now it is becoming harder to hold on to this interim, it must be nearing dawn in the new real world; I can feel the recall fading and the conditions locking in; now my face is changing

into its new lines. Quick, is there anything I can salvage from my fading knowledges by way of a catch-phrase, a maxim, an apparently irrational superstition or preference I can give my new person? You know, "My tables—meet it is I set it down" (there, you see, I am beginning to fit into character (I couldn't resist a last " ")). Coherence fading here. Yes, yes I think, avoid working with electricity

6.

as much as possible, smoke menthol cigarettes, I forget why, and "a stitch in time saves nine". I toss and turn for a while and now drift off totally. Then it was morning, my sleep had been uneasy: uncomfortable dreams. One involved a baby getting bitten by a rat, another was about a conspiracy to bypass the rules, starting with a gang of anarchists posing as mobsters and trying to take over a movie house. That's probably because summer was approaching and some nights were already becoming too hot for good sleep. Helen and I had discussed putting in an air conditioner, but they just gobble up electricity

and I certainly wouldn't have welcomed the bills, with

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the baby coming and all. I had lately had the fear that the baby would be retarded, or deformed. I knew it was unfounded, but it was very hard to shake; and it seemed connected with the expectation of some compensating good fortune. Well, of course I hardly thought anything could really compensate; I just mean that there was the impression of some connection. Anyhow, things flowed on, my internal fund of energy and the summer months continued to drain

away together. Time passed slowly. When fall term started, Helen was staying home, taking some time off and waiting for the baby, but continued her research. I drew a good crop of undergraduates this time; it was an independent seminar, not just a discussion-to-go-with-a-lecture-course as before. My own studies did not go so well; I found I had only superficial knowledge in areas I had imagined I had down pat. Strange lapses. The baby was born and seemed to be normal at first. Later we discovered she was epileptic. Helen's biography of Borges was nominated for the National Book Award, and she was invited to the MLA convention to present her study of Kafka, Beckett, and Borges. I didn't really mind it that much to find myself the one washing dishes, changing

the baby's diapers, sweeping floors. Wait a minute now! Something wrong there. Definitely; now, I mean, sitting here discussing this recollection for you, I feel a sickening chord of recognition in something I just said: a mistake, a repetition where variation was required. The baby's diapers, is that it? Remember the story I told you the other day about Alan, our oldest friend? Well, there is yet another version of that story, in which the characters are older than we suspected, their age is at the very least the same as the author's, which is fifty-five. They are also criminals of some sort. Now now, honey, sit still and stop fidgeting or you'll be exhausted

before we've even hardly begun. Just take a seat on this footstool and Grandpa will go into it in detail. Now it seems this criminal conspiracy is organizing to violate the laws. Naturally. The ringleader, an old crone named Ellen, or Olga, I forget which, has escaped from a retirement home in Tampa. She rounds up former members of the gang, those she thinks were secretly dissidents. These folks are all growing old, mind you, and some of them are nearly senile; they must have failing memories, for they seem to have forgotten the oaths of secrecy they gave when Big Al first invited them to join, long ago. So they lack the proper caution. They are indiscreet, and inevitably their activities are noticed by the authorities. The first slip is when they try to find one who has gone into disguise. Overcoming his lameness, he is impersonating a much younger man, a community organizer. When Ellen's group tries to approach him there is some slipup and his child is killed, by rat bite fever. This makes the papers. Later, during the time they are first consolidating power and setting up their illicit businesses, they find another old member running a subway train. They snatch him then and there, the train crashes, there is an investigation. The FBI gets involved when an important scientist disappears. And so on. As the heat increases they get frantic, they get reckless. They suspect they have found one more in disguise, either this established particle physicist or that graduate student in French Literature. They try the latter, but take him while he's sleeping. During a dream. And this is a terrible error, for he has been dreaming the dreams. Things begin dissolving about them, they can feel the cycle starting to close, none of them is at all prepared. In another version of that dream, he goes on to the next day imagining that he remembered to shut off all the appliances the previous evening, which would have made things smoother for him. Later he wakes up, goes to class, grades term papers: "Shakespeare and Time", "Alain Robbe-Grillet, the Invisible Man", "Joyce's Choices, Dickens' Pickins", etc. He comes home and worries about the appliances. He can't understand this discrepancy. His baby, the epileptic little girl, has ceased to exist. He gets terrible headaches. Finally he escapes by turning into a medical student; fortunately there is an opening. It's just damn lucky, he thinks, that I remembered to shut off all the appliances before going to bed last night. He goes to the hospital the next morning and is incompetent when the Attending takes the interns on rounds, questioning them vigorously. As punishment he is to be assigned to the free clinic emergency room, where he will show the birth-control movies all day while his luckier colleagues get to handle the lacerations, contusions, and rat bites. He comes home worn out every day and often drops right off to sleep without remembering to complete his evening chores around the house. Turning off the electric appliances, disconnecting the dishwasher from the tap, turning off the electric appliances, letting out the cat, turning off the electric appliances, that sort of thing, you know. He grows forgetful. That's when he strives to get back on the right track, but as the dream continues we seem to be in a movie theatre. The projector is still plugged in. Is this a double feature? No, a festival. First there is a documentary, about housing conditions in the central city. Then a biography of some South American writer. Save these seats, please, we're going for popcorn. An adaptation of Kazantzakis's *Last Temptation*. Then a thriller in which an important rocket scientist is kidnapped. It becomes difficult to continue watching; perhaps our eyes are tiring; or the management is running the projector at the wrong speed

to confuse us. We'll just get up and leave if they don't fix it soon, who cares if we paid for the whole show already? Ollie, can't you keep your baby quiet, we're trying to hear the movie. It turns out to be a gangster story. The gangsters file up the aisles of the theatre. They hold everyone at gunpoint; they take several hostages. They demand that the films be run backward to the beginning. No, just back to the point where the baby's diapers were mentioned for the second time. They want this scene altered: almost anything else will do, but not times, locks, lanes, or faces. Look it up. Everybody agrees, what else can we do, given the circumstances? So they look it up, in the rulebook. But the projectionist is awfully nervous: after all, it's hard to work with a gun held to one's head. His hands are shaking violently. He jams the machine. It all goes out of focus, the frame on screen is knocked completely sideways.

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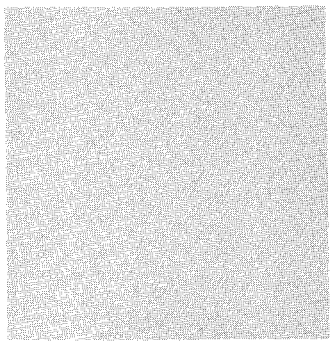
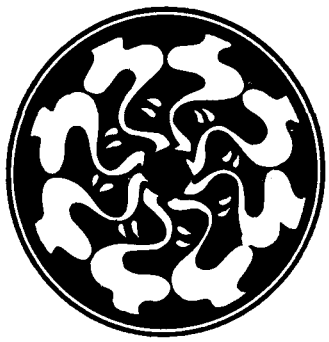
We don't ever get to see the film we mainly came for, *Simple Cause and Effect*, by the new Turkish director Ilan Pim. With the frame now so confused everyone is stumbling about. Nobody knows where she or he belongs. . . . Where is my baby, where is my husband, where are the people I came here with, where's my coat, who took my glasses? Where's the party? Where's the fire? Someone's feet get tangled in the film and finally pull it entirely out of the projector. Everything goes muddy, we are all lost. Preterite? The mud pours in the windows and doors, rushes through the hall, rips the rows of seats from their moorings, devours the curtains and drowns all the patrons. All but the hero and heroine. They float off crying quietly in the rain. One day the dove returns from her scouting with a leafy twig in her mouth. Soon they see a rainbow. And then they bump something solid, just under the surface. As the waters recede they unpack all the animals and set up housekeeping there on the mountain, planting seeds, bearing children, brewing their beer, and showing their nakedness. The music rises. The letters rush from a tiny spot at the center to fill the foreground: FINE. Another version of the same film is merely allegory: the flood is the flow of semen, the animals are the sperm, the mountain is the ovum. From this point it becomes farfetched, the rainbow is either the wedding ring or the newborn daughter's hymen, Jehovah's promise is the condom, the dove is the woman's orgasm, the bumping into the mountain is the labor pain, etc. In the end, life drags itself on into the next generation or the next era, much the same as before. In another version, the film is a documentary, *Agnes: 1972*. Heavy rains in preceding weeks, the progress of the storm, shots of wind and lightning, interviews with tearful survivors, the Governor's Mansion at Harrisburg with boats parked in front of it, the Red Cross to the rescue, etc. Or else *Art Along the Arno*, in which case the rescue is by generous international contributions and rugged young art students, carrying marbles up staircases and later restoring the damaged treasures. This is followed by a cartoon version, set in antiquity. Warriors are scattered over the plain, beating their way back and forth between the city and the sea as one force then the other gains the upper hand. A thunder shower breaks and they all run for shelter. This may be a secondary joke, that they are really just big babies. Ajax, here drawn virtually as a caveman, lopes over to Odysseus through the rising mud, scratches his head, puts a finger to his upper teeth, and says "Uh, tell me Odysseus, where does the rain come from, anyway?" Odysseus thinks, strokes his beard, then unrolls a book boldly labelled *Works of Aristotle*. "Well, Ajax," he says, "you know Atlas has to take a leak once in a while too just like you or me." It is not clear whether he is reading directly or is talking down for Ajax's benefit. Thersites adds, "And if you think this is bad, just wait until he flushes." Blackout. Industry scuttlebutt has it that the producer is in financial difficulties and was only able to salvage this much out of a much longer project he was starting. They picture him asking himself, If "The Crunch Bird" can win an Oscar, why not this? They also say that through loss of nerve he deleted from a previous version reference to defecation and substituted "Atlas" for "the gods". Another version is basically a visual study: rain, fountains, water flowing across sheets of glass, containers filling up, waterfalls. All of this with various lightings, multiple exposures, split screens, high contrast black and white shots printed in colors, solarizations, flickerings and slow strobes, and a variety of effects done with the optical printer. An electronic score. C'mon, dummy, wake up and take a walk. Whadda we gotta do to get through to ya? Ya wanna just lay there and wetcher bed? There is another version of this film, returning to the costume-drama, historical-romance mode. However, this one has a less serious tone than the first. The hero is an Indian mystic, Ullenth Ramamurti. The action begins when he ruins his feet attempting the firewalk and becomes a laughingstock, the butt of all the village cruelty. Shame and abuse drive him





away. He denounces the people in a fiery speech which is so moving that many hang their heads and make resolutions of self-improvement. He doesn't quite believe that the flood he's heard so much about from the important seers will really be coming soon, but when he goes off to meditate in solitude for ten years he plans to pick a cave well up on the mountain slope, just in case. And, mind you, it is extremely difficult for him to accomplish this climbing with his scabby stumps, but he makes it at last; the journey takes nearly two years in itself. You could say that this demonstrates his dedication, except that he decides to count it as what we would now call job-related legitimate travelling time, and gives himself that much credit towards his vow. All along the way, he spreads his message to bewildered auditors, is sometimes heeded and sometimes nearly killed, and achieves some passing fame through most of the land. Now he selects a suitable cave, builds his nest, and settles down for a long winter's nap. If you prefer, prepares for his deep dark voyage of truth down, down, down, into the inner depths where he is to seek true inner peace and true cosmic harmony. The film does not make clear at this point which might be the closer interpretation. Or perhaps he is merely waiting for his toes to grow back. The morally ugly or materialistically preoccupied people below go about their usual lives, as crass and as cruel to each other as they were before the hero shamed them. Early in his third year in the cave the rain begins. Soon the rivers overrun their banks. The noise of many waters, far below. Ullenth's native village is shown being washed away, with all the peasants from the opening sequences scurrying about in fright. Next goes one of the villages he stopped at on his way up; this is actually a more spectacular destruction than the last, and was used for the trailer. Inexorably the water rises, until the whole subcontinent seems but a vast sea. But Ullenth is still safe in his cave, for the time being, oblivious to the external world. By careful cutting and musical manipulation the audience is made to understand that the water's climb is slowing down at last, gradually approaching its final maximum preparatory to the

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ebb. An interval of mounting tension occurs here: where is it going to peak? It creeps into the cave, across the floor, onto the mat, and touches his disfigured heels. He is flat on his back, so that there is a coordination in the shots of water rising along his back-front axis at several different parts of his body; it is established, for example, that the covering of his shoulders means his ears are completely gone and his face is in danger. His mouth and nose are of course the crucial concerns. The coordination is made to pay off following a shot of the corners of his mouth first being wetted; in closeup now, there is a cut to the water crawling up along his soles. This shot is the culminating echo of all the concentration that has been given to the history of his feet. At this point the director must have had a difficult choice among several possible conclusions, depending on how he wished to resolve the ambiguity of tone displayed in the film so far. Or of course he could end right there, with no resolution. Or one version might show Ullenth's feet barely covered by the last inch of flood and miraculously restored by the flood water, which has seen and assimilated so much suffering that it had no choice but to be transformed into a potent balm. He wakes from his trance, discovers the restitution, and follows the receding flood down the mountain, running and skipping with, well, somber joy perhaps, down to the plains where he meets the pilgrimages of new settlers and returning penitents and enlightens them with his experience. A related possibility also gives him a sort of salvation, perhaps with a relieving touch of irony. This one would be a solitary experience. The waters do in fact continue, and close over him completely. But in his drowning he has the vision he sought and achieves at least some modest measure of peace and harmony. A contrary version might show the waters halting just in time and starting to seep away. But Ullenth, in the course of a bad dream, or perhaps an apotheosizing vision, who knows, rolls over and flops off his mat, face down in the water. He naturally drowns, and there is just enough water left in his cave to float his body out and away to join the thousands of others. The thousands of others who have been liberated from the deceptive tissue of maya which is ordinary life, it might be said, but still rather gory, don't you think? Better yet, his flop-and-drown might be not into the contiguous body of flood, but into a puddle left by the receding water in a shallow depression of the cave floor. With proper camera work this would convincingly tie in with an episode much earlier in the film, in which hostile inhabitants of one of the villages he passed through forced him to consume gallons of their local rice wine until he became roaring drunk, made a fool of himself, and finally passed out in a puddle beside the dung heap, sad as the sea-bird is when going forth alone. Another possibility is also negative, but not so frivolous. Again the last thrust of the rising flood is just enough to drown him. But here he is not seen as anyone special at all, except in the accident of living at a greater physical elevation than the rest of the population. The waters can now chalk up their final victim and, their business completed, recede with a sigh of accomplishment. It is equally simple to name some considerations the director surely did not bother with: ☞ that the first gulp of water might just as well wake the hero as leave him to drown, this objection being potentially met by the explanation that the trance is very deep and differs considerably from ordinary sleep, at least in the quality of interruptibility, an explanation which the director, however, did not choose to make clear: ☞ that the swelling of water up across the supine body could logically be imagined ending with the tip of the erect penis instead of with the face, so sufficiently incongruous an imagining that the director cannot be faulted for failing to fret over eliminating it from the audience's domain of expectations; ☞ that not only in swollen drowned resurfacing but almost equally in normal life the human body is, as any swimmer might tell you, fairly buoyant and quite capable of refusing to sit there like a dumb stone and just allow itself to be inundated, a probability enhanced by two factors in the particular situation of this film, the first being that the hero has at least passively adopted some of the measures used by active floaters, namely lying on his back with chin up, breathing smoothly and deeply, and refraining from floundering about, and the second being that the buoyancy of the body is to an extent a localized property, notably because it owes a great deal to the air in the lungs, rather than being a uniform property of just any tissue at all, meaning that despite the evident ability of the intact body to float pretty well some portions of it are themselves quite dense, including the hero's missing toes, balls of the feet, and forward arches, which would have been hard and bony and whose loss therefore diminishes his weight more than his volume, that is relative of course to the ratio found in water, while his many blisters and swellings contribute to his volume no less than to his weight, again relatively speaking, thus giving the Archimedean balance two additional tips toward flotation, though it ought in fairness to be mentioned that fat is somewhat buoyant and the hero appears to have none of it, as would after all be expected after his years of starvation; ☞ and finally that, given the locale and the character's personal background, he might just at the right moment discover the secret of levitation and float safely to the ceiling of his cave, in this case without any of the rigamarole of physics. Very well then: without bothering to make any of these subsidiary considerations, and faced with a choice among those general lines of conclusion, the director does manage to give the film an ending. He picks the second version. Sound effect: the winds' cry to the waters' monotone. The water, now advancing up the soles of Ullenth's stumps, does not hesitate in the least. It covers him. He drowns. From above, a shot of his head lolling and his eyes slowly opening underwater, staring blankly ahead past the camera at a point slightly to one side. Then a spiral down to what must be his interior point of view, and a voice-over which has not been heard since the beginning of the film explains the vision he receives upon drowning, now being illustrated on the screen. The vision is colored by the premise that Ullenth is a believer in metempsychosis. It appears that periodically the universe comes apart at the seams, like a sliced pear. The interstices of time open wide, cracks gape all along the foundations. The glue dissolves, plateaus of legitimate reality buckle and collide, entropy is suspended, every variety of encounter is moved to a different level. Some personalities are abstracted out of the world, to view their progress, to receive honors and shames, to be reminded of and enjoy the universal perspective, to contribute to the reconstruction, to obtain the roles and attributes of their places in the new order. There is often frenzied trading and infighting for the important attributes; one of the most coveted is a high access to memory of previous cycles and

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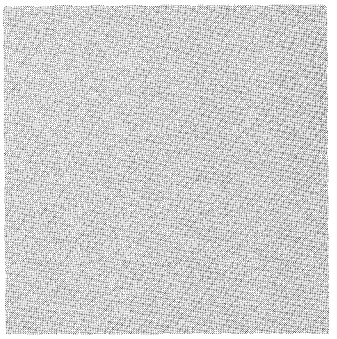
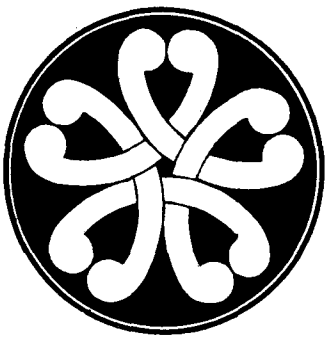
interims and of the fact or vision of the system itself, and thus a scepticism about the reality of any current cycle, though sometimes leading to head-banging on walls and the idea that life is "a watch or a vision between a sleep and a sleep". That is fairly common, such memory, awarded at large in different degrees, from under-two-percent to nearly total; much rarer is the realization that not all previous worlds have been like a current one in structure of experience: most of us, even among those with over-ninety-percent memories, believe that previous worlds were much like the current one and only roles are exchanged and created. Soon we reach agreements about these widespread conditions to apply during the next cycle; we begin to freeze into the limitations imposed by individual conditions on each newly assumed character; the interim adjourns and begins to fade away with each of us lapsing into normal midnight sleep as a new self, that is if the reconstruction includes a practice like sleep and a sequence of days and nights. Almost all the recent ones have, everyone seems to agree that you just get sore and confused without them. Even that awful cycle that emerged as *How It Is* included periods when we could lie down mumbling into the mud, getting stabbed, singing, etc., you remember. During a cycle, we all know on some level of thought, no matter how small an access to memory we have obtained during the last interim, that the next interim is already rolling around toward us, and this eventuality is welcomed and feared, hastened and then desperately delayed; just as during an interim we first wish for nothing more than its end and the beginning of the next cycle and yet soon end up fighting against the loss of memory that goes with the end of an interim. Do you remember the one when everybody got to keep full memory right into the cycle itself? The differentiation then was in whether or not you would know that not the entire population of the world was in on the game. A good half of us ended up in asylums before the cycle was over. Bedlams they called them then, as in "Mind Partner". Or the contrary one, when we forgot about the characters besides ourselves in the game, and each thought he had discovered the cycles and controlled the reconstruction himself, like a god. That was followed by a very sad interim. But both of those broke the very ground rules, and there has been none of that since. Even so, there's more room for variety than what we generally come up with. Changing Planck's Constant, building muon atoms, pfui, nobody even notices, it just scales down. The telepathic ones are awful. The floating dust clouds one, that was very good. Now this recent one promises to be rather ordinary. Drowning there in the cave, emerging into this vision, participating in the next interim, I have gained the right to use the word "I" and parentheses, the right to use people's secret names in direct address, a few additional percentage points of access to memory of the rules and the chance to *sap* up to another six points from unwary victims. I have lost much of my stamina, will be easily *tired*, and will have to drop out earlier each day; this is a fairly serious problem. I have lost the ability to recognize *shadow* characters. Look it up: in the rulebook? Have I said "hastened then desperately delayed"? I hardly need to tell you that, after you've been watching me paint the lines on the clock finer and finer, after I've made you sit with me in the movies so long. I know it's futile, but I always begin to panic near the end. If I made better use of the early steps I might not have this problem, but look: I ran right through how many twelve or eighteen of them at the beginning with hardly a stop for breath. And when I realized and tried to slow down there wasn't much time left and I've ended up stretching this final tick almost as long as everything before. Just the last of thirty-six equals, yet we've grown it swollen past reason. But I give up, I might as well let it go. After all, even with me dragging my feet the interim began and I received my attributes. Now possible roles to embody are presented: I will be moved way up to the XIX or XX Century (a reward for all my forbearance as Ullenth Ramamurti, perhaps) and will be animated as one of the





following women: Susan Art, Jane Austen, Milly and Mrs. Marion (Molly) Bloom, Julia Bader, Chris Bartlett Bartlett, Sally Bowles, Cynthia Ellen Carbondale, the woman with the face of phenomenal reserved beauty in Caillebotte's "Rainy Day", Marie Curie, Marcia Distiller, Clarissa Dalloway, Mary Dunne, Joan Duncan, George Eliot (see also under "E"), Margot Fonteyn, Judy Fagin, Greta Garbo, Susan Green, Carolyn Gehle, Grace Green, Oriane de Guermantes, Susan Holahan, Dolores Haze, Nancy Hopkins, Angela Incardona, Ellen Jones, Carmen Jones, Mrs. Jurgen, Carolyn Kennedy, both Anne Kellys, Ellen Kaisse, one Joan Kurtz, the other Joan Kurtz, Sarah Kozloff, the Young Doctor Kildare's wife, Victoria Lord, Louise Latham, Ann Landers, Alice Leiner, Malvina Leiner, Alice Liddell, Frazer Lively, Ana Liphi, Randi Liff, Zee M. Look (Chicago), Mary Tyler Moore, Robin Marks (the author's sister), Margaret Mead, Virginia Meadow, Marilyn Monroe, Bobbie Meltzer, Bobbie McGee, Marie O'Byrne, Flannery O'Connor, Diana VanWyck O'Gorman, Ida Pollack, Sara Postalthwaite, Ellen Quentin, Corinne Rafferty, Lily Rowan, Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt, Mary-Ellen Ratuszny, Diane Rudall, Beryl Rowland, Alma Dean Kolb Rumsey, Rudnick, Susan Sontag, Gertrude Stein, Joan Tsafoyannis, Ellen Untermeyer, Ilene Ullenth, Helena Ulbertine, Amy Vanderbilt, Virginia Wexman, Janice "Penny Lane" Withers, Ellen Xavier, Clementine Young, Lillian Zimmerman, Miroslava Zednikova, Stephanie N. Zyzda (Chicago), Yawnish Yonist, Helen Xavier, Giudi Weiss (no: withdrawn, she will keep this herself), Domeneca J. Vagena (Chicago), Priscilla Seidler, Nathalie Sarraute, Sally Struthers, Jean Sacks, Albertine Simonet, Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Ellen Smith", Gilberte Swann, Brancha Stevens, Rita Maria Salmonella, Anita Sandke, Jacqueline Susann, Margaret Solomon (Hawaii), Yma Sumac, Mary Sandler, Marcia Staiman, India Stevens, Viva Superstar, Annette Stillman, Carolovna Sardonicus, Vivian Sapir (this section of the list is so expanded in honor of *j'éxpire*, who will surface here again), Olga Sinistra, Jone Jonah Sister Jonathon Maureen Tess Rubano, Pauline Réage, Dr. Panda-

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letes, Carrie Nation, Carrie Nye, Anais Nin, Ellen Noone, Sharon Meltzer, Susanne Langer, Carolyn Lewis, Diana Kemeny ("with love, gratefully"), Ellen Io, Zenna Henderson, You Her (Chicago, quite legit), Ernestine Hemongway, Nancy Harris (Lehnhardt), Glenda the Good, Abbie Freedman, Mary Anne Evans (see also under "E"), Joan DiSantis, Diane Di Prima, Miriam Allen de Ford, Meg Custer, Elaine Bluitt, Ursula Buendia, Nora Barnacle, Isabel Archer, or "A. . . .". Ah there, up to my same old tricks, you see. A stubborn final respite, that's all. Allow the tick to be tocked, all right, I guess I'm as ready as I'll ever be. Quick, very quick, everyone else is getting impatient with me. I choose the last one, any. Now we all fade back. Until next time then, Dir. Remember me, all, and I'll do my best to help you along, too. (We all receive a warning that a criminal conspiracy is trying to stop the rules and freeze frame in a single world. They kidnap to recruit, provoke disasters to create dissatisfaction. Know them by how their names are formed.) Snap. Here it closes. A noise, a flutter at this point. Gears stripping, strobes bringing on epileptic seizures. Give me the keys. Into the hopper, down the oubliette. In dissolution, I am falling. I was falling, I felt all itchy. Then I woke up. I had had an unpleasant dream, about some gangsters taking over a movie theatre. Bill, that's my husband, gave me a rubdown. Bill was in his third year of med school at the time, while I was already real faculty, in the Spanish Department. This was the year before the one I took off to have the baby. I worked on my biography, while Bill, in French, took one class, started his dissertation, and as teaching assistant handled one class of undergraduates. Something wrong there. Since Bill was an up and coming chief resident in Ob-Gyn, please settle down, he gave me enthralling descriptions of how the baby was developing through each stage inside. We got along wonderfully despite the tensions of my pregnancy. The only major argument was about appliances. Bill wanted to get an air conditioner, a toaster, a mixer, an automatic can opener, all sorts of gadgets. I had some irrational superstitious fear and opposed him all along the line, but we compromised on each occasion and ended up accumulating more and more of them, far too many to really suit me. One other minor disagreement came when one of Bill's old friends stopped on his way through town to visit us. This was Alain, from Quebec. He and Bill had been involved in "the Movement" together several years ago, before—as Alain would put it—Bill was co-opted. Alain's current version of it was French Canadian independence. But his radicalism had blinders. He berated me for running around town, shopping, dashing to the library, when I ought to be sitting placidly at home waiting for the baby. I expected Bill to take my side against this blatant sexism but, oddly, he didn't and we sulked at each other until Alain left. Though I couldn't claim an absolute connection, I felt that my extended research, rewriting, and expansion were more than justified when my Borges biography was nominated for the National Book Award. Of course, for a while there I felt that practically everything I had ever done became justified by that. Alain went off to speak all across the American midwest, and though I've heard of him since, on the news, we've had no personal contact. My position in the other argument also turned out right, I believe. This happened a good deal later, when Eileen was about two and a half. Caring for an epileptic child had taken its toll on us, and we decided to go on a vacation by ourselves. We left the baby with an elderly neighbor woman, Olga, I think, or maybe Ellen. We went out to New York and visited another of Bill's old friends, Alvin, a community organizer. We got the news by phone one afternoon when we stopped back at our hotel after a busy day at Alvin's place, the news that our apartment building was utterly devastated; and the Fire Department investigation suggested that it had started in our own apartment, perhaps from our stereo amplifier being left on. This was too grim a situation for me to worry about petty I-told-you-so's, but I thought them and knew that Bill did also. Eileen was okay at least, thanks for that. And the visit East was also a disaster. We were going to drive back immediately upon hearing the news, but Alvin talked us into spending a last evening with them. So we went driving through the rain from our hotel to visit Alvin, planning to spend the evening with his family, maybe go out to a movie together, or maybe spend some time at Elaine's, the new "in" bar. But there was something wrong with him. He was ill at ease, disturbed. He seemed a mere shade of his former self; physically, yes, but also in terms of personality presence. Alvin had always been calm, supportive, the logical one. Now there was a terrible. . .um, lightning crackling around him, spreading his unease to us. We talked for a long time. His wife went to give the baby new diapers and returned pale as a specter. You understand how it has to end, you must feel the last tock ticking, the last legislated word rolling into place, trying to sneak in when I'm not looking. Help me fend it off. We have unfortunately gotten on the same track as before the explosion, before the diapers. The baby had been bitten by a rat. They lived in a very run-down place, to be brief, no need to worry about the Tenants' Union and the court order, let's just have them there for variety, fleetingly. Then we raced down to the hospital with the baby. Alvin was like a maniac, zooming right up behind other cars, switching lanes without looking, let alone signalling in advance, running stop signs and red lights. He blew the horn constantly; he plunged right through the deepest puddles. He ran right up on the curb once, sideswiping a lamppost and a mailbox. He made a left turn in the face of traffic and caused an accident. He ignored a police car flashing and screaming behind us. But you see through these tricks. He drove some more. And some more. And some more. And some more. And some more. This won't work long, I admit. And some more. And some more. And some more. . . . And it was all just as reckless, foolhardy, incompetent. It was a series of miraculous escapes. Finally our luck ran out. On a curve, Alvin tried to dart between a truck and a bus which had stopped to let off passengers. But the bus started up too soon. We were caught. Alvin's wife Elena survived the longest, dying in the ambulance; the rest of us were already dead before the rescue crews even got there. Oh, Grandpa! Is that really how the story goes? No, Sally, I'm just getting a scratchy throat, I can't read to you any more tonight. Now put the footstool back over by the rocker and run up to bed. Oh please, Grandpa, won't you read me another story? I'll go to bed right after, I promise. Read me, "Goldilocks", that's the one I really wanted to hear: what did you take that book I don't like to be read to out of down for? No, I'm sorry, it's much too late. And way past your bedtime too, little girl! Run along now, and be careful climbing the stairs where the carpet's loose. He feels the pangs of love in caring for this poor epileptic child. We'll

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have other evenings, and after all it's a very long book we've been reading bits and pieces from and you know you're getting tired. In fact it has more than 1132 pages. The reader turns another of them, looks it over, and closes the book. He resumes walking about and mumbling to himself. As promised, he's someone you know well. He is not really the reading type, he was only doing it because it's obligatory for this scene, the important *lisant au livre de lui-même* scene. His girlfriend is sitting to one side, also reading, but from a book of devotions. Her father, Polonius, has been scheming with the King to set up this encounter. He'll damn well give them a good show to keep up this madness bit. But sooner or later he has to face up to his central problem. He would feel like an utter fool doing it, but if necessary he could go around and apologise to his mother and uncle and girlfriend and schoolchums and say now I'm cured, sorry for all the trouble I caused, congratulations on your marriage, let's make up and get married and I'll fix it up with your brother who I actually like and of course then there's your father who I suppose I could learn to tolerate, thanks for your visit and I'll see you back at Wittenberg next year practice your duelling ha-ha, so long. On the other hand, maybe he should force a confrontation soon. Or maybe he should just kill himself. Now that's very sensible. But let's not be too harsh on him. After all, he may be dealing with a world he's never encountered before. In the end, it all depends on whether he can believe all the terrific things he heard that rainy night from the ghost.

7.

Then you met the Ghost of Electricity.

"You are a boulder rolling down the mountain with uncontrollable speed, you are a speck of vomit left on the drain,"

he said, "and if you feel your possibilities are exhausted, that's only because nothing at all, for the moment, is changing □

KATE JENNINGS

THE CLOSED HOUSE

The small orchard's meager crop's no harvest
this year. Ignored, the apples drop piecemeal,
sheer windfall. In a rush the colors come down,
a sheet, a blanket muffling sound. Now
the landscape's sheet-draped, abandoned
this season. The owner's gone south.

Inside shined brass dulls, losing its polish.
The andirons sulk by the cold fireplace.
No one rifles the Almanac on its string on the wall
or rakes the ashes. The halls are cold.

Small creatures take over:
rabbits, squirrels, a mouse.
Grouse and quail share seed pods.
Deer browse on twigs.

These thick mists circle no street lamps.
No parlor's lighted against the dusk.
What rustles the leaves isn't booted or shod,
and over them at night the night crackles with cold.

The stars are put now to no practical usage:
no pilot, sailor, surveyor tells time
or direction or position by them.
They simply twinkle, as the rhyme said;
and if a final ruddy fruit falls with a thud,
who uses it is plural and not human.

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STEVE ORLEN

TAKE

On nights like this
I stop at the mounds of garbage
hoping to find some news.
The puffed-up bag behind the pushcart
is human so I sit, invited to read
last week's *Times* and *Daily News*.
At midnight, she wears sunglasses
and a clown's circle of rouge
on each swollen cheek. Under a week of soot
she is marble white
on her throat, her thighs and knees.
It's summer. We're hot together.
Her monumental New York breasts
tug at her armpits, but she's proud
and cups them and squeezes them
like a child's cheeks, and winks.
Black sweat runs the avenue between.

She offers me the week's statistics,
where the cops will let her sleep,
and I who have no daily news
can give her none. She tells me she gets
"five bucks to go down on
a doorman on Fifth Avenue,
and he won't kiss, won't even pet."
She knows each stray crazed street crime,
shot fired, rape, needle park,
which block of hallways
is on a beefed-up beat.
She asks where I live,
and I who always live somewhere
am vague. She suspects I'm rich.
But I'm vague
and therefore to be wondered with.

If I feel sorry
it's for nothing. She owns
roller skates, three half suits of clothes,
a hairdryer, a ball of string, a corset,
enough keys to make a superintendent jealous.
Here at midnight, on the street,
like some New York birthday cake,
she squints and reads and offers me
the day's news of her life.
Take, she seems to say, so I take.

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Joseph W. Meeker

Ambidextrous Education

or: How Universities Can Come Unskewed and Learn to Live in the Wilderness

A space-filler in *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* proclaimed: "We can't put it all together; it *is* all together." That is true. What we can do is to take it all apart, as educational and other institutions have been doing for several centuries. Fragmentation resulting from specialization has helped to skew both the world and the minds of those of us who live on it.

Margaret Mead, presiding at a 1975 meeting on "systems thinking and the quality of life", remarked that in all cultures she had observed or heard about, human patterns of thinking seem to be divided into two distinct types: linear and synthetic. The linear mode of thought takes one thing at a time, organizing both time and space into discrete units which may be hierarchically ranked according to chronology, value and power. Linear thinking reads the world page by page or word by word, and takes notes in outline form. Synthetic thinking prefers to read books rather than pages and loves chords more than melodies. Simultaneity and irony are the marks of synthetic thought, and its system of notation is a spaghetti-decorated page of words, arrows, marginal doodles, and fragments from love letters or laundry lists. Dr. Mead suggested (speaking in a linear way) that these patterns of thinking are both present in the genetic endowment of human mentality; they *are* human thought, and no third pattern seems likely or possible.

One can imagine a Blakelike drawing in which God, enthroned on a cloud, prescribes for small souls at their birth either a linear or a synthetic pattern for their mental lives. If, as seems likely, the hidden name of God is spelled DNA, then a few helical nucleic acid chains might be added to update the drawing. But it is probably not that easy. Minds are not linear or synthetic in the way that skin is dark or light, hair is blond or brunette, or sex is sorted between the two familiar types. Normal brains appear to be talented in both linear and synthetic modes to begin with, leaving the balance between them to be influenced later by forces less dependable than either God or DNA: by nurture and education.

Human brains come equipped with two hemispheres: linear functions on the left and synthetic ones on the right side. Connecting them are the multi-million fibers of the *corpus callosum* to assure that each hemisphere is well acquainted with what is going on next door. The left hemisphere is expert at such analytical functions as discursive language and mathematics. It divides perceptions into discrete bundles, labels and stores them in neat stacks, and creates a cross-referenced filing system for their orderly retrieval. From the left brain comes the command that knowledge must never be folded, spindled, or used to shim shaky table legs. The right brain fusses less about such things, concerned as it is to arrange perceptions into novel and interesting arabesques, poetic figures, fantasies, and wild ideas. Right brains make doodles in the margins of the left brain's orderly notes. Left brains construct melodies and syllogisms from the same raw materials used by right brains to compose fugues and metaphors. Yesterday's crazy idea from the right becomes tomorrow's standard equipment on the left. Apollo, Yang, and The Organization Man live on the left; Dionysus, Yin, and The White Goddess live on the right.

Margaret Mead didn't say so, but I think it likely that the linear left brain has been the public spokesman for most cultures. It is articulate, precise, and skilled at formulating the rules and regulations used by most societies to govern their collective affairs. The left brain explains how things work, thus providing a way for people to exchange information about nature, about their own thoughts, and even about the feelings that become obvious enough to deserve a public name. Thanks to the left brain, people are able to think orderly thoughts about the world.

The dominant thinkers in the great cultures have generally leaned most heavily upon their left hemispheres, and their pronouncements were received by audiences listening with their left brains. Aristotle and Confucius, classic left-brainers, make sense to more people than do right-brainers like Heraclitus and Lao-Tzu. Tragic authors with their linear expositions of public morals and passions seem more socially acceptable than comic authors with their seemingly purposeless ambiguities and circular muddles. Piecemeal public planning has always prevailed over more complex systemic policies. Henry Kissinger's methodical strategies inspire respect and produce desirable results because they are the sophisticated products of a left brain unimpeded by the hemisphere to its immediate right. Especially in a democracy, the will of the majority is generally expressed through one-thing-at-a-time policies.

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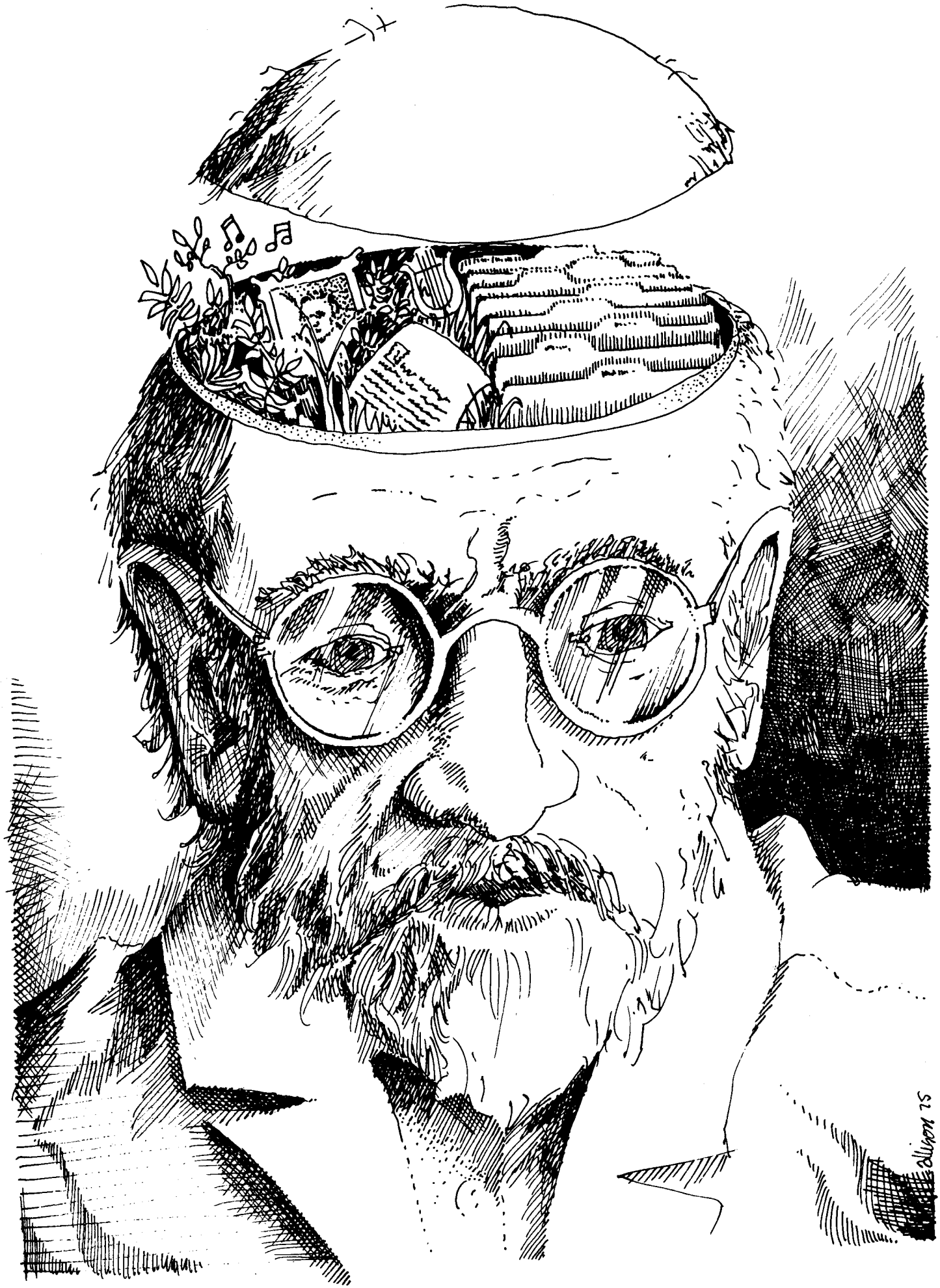

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Ambidextrous Education

Leaders are usually people who can best satisfy that public expectation. The practical advantages of linear thinking have proved so dramatic in recent centuries that many have ceased to expect the right brain ever to appear in public. Scientists and engineers are expected to have no emotions and their prose is suspect if it commits a metaphor. Politicians are doomed when they get horny for nightclub strippers, and it is even worse when they write poetry. Scholars who step beyond the boundaries of their academic departments quickly become people of no importance. A chemist who writes short stories had better do so under a pen name and leave those titles off his list of publications. Those who want to retain their specialized status in the world of affairs cannot afford to nourish the synthetic functions of their right brains. Do one thing and do it well, they preach.

Ecology is an academic study that tries to do more than one thing, and that is why it is an embarrassment to many scientists, a threat to politicians, and a mystery to the news media and its followers among the general public. Indulgent and paternalistic critics of ecology call it a "soft" science to distinguish it from the hardcore disciplines like physics and chemistry which are built upon the linear rock of mathematical logic. No respectable scientific discipline, they feel, should attract a following among housewives, high school kids, and long-haired freaks, as ecology has done. Nor should a proper natural science concern itself with cultural ideologies, international and local politics, religion or art, as ecology sometimes has. It is bad enough that ecologists should mix together such disciplines as botany, zoology, meteorology, geology, physics, and chemistry. Why can't ecologists just tend to their own gardens like other good scientists? There is an answer: ecology is a science more interested in wilderness than in gardens.

Ecology is but one manifestation of a new taste for natural and mental wilderness that may be the most significant development of twentieth century thought. We have been forced, against our left-minded will and better judgment, to develop tolerance for diversity on almost every level of thought and experience. Simple logical answers have failed us too often, and unexpectable surprises have eroded our former faith in the linear predictability of things. Bizarre facts simply refuse to submit to standard measures. We must somehow make new sense of a world where plants experience emotions like our own, where ESP is a widespread phenomenon and psychokinesis is demonstrated in laboratories, where animal societies are as complex as human social orders and where some animals, like dolphins and elephants, may have brains more sophisticated than ours, where women, blacks and Indians are as human as other people. Expert economists consistently fail to understand the events of economics, businessmen destroy business and laborers destroy work, conservative politicians like Nixon turn out to be revolutionaries capable of overthrowing governments by force. Physicists talk of indeterminacy, while microbiologists confront us with double helixes and random mutabilities. Without a tolerance for wilderness-like diversity, sanity can scarcely survive in a world like this.

Toleration, though painful to begin with, eventually becomes taste. That is where we are now, at the fenceline of yesterday's garden with a growing yen to step into tomorrow's wilderness. While we wait for our courage to grow, we are messing around energetically with some new kinds of structures suitable to what we guess wilderness living might require. Ecology is obviously one useful tool, providing we can make it live up to its promise of genuinely integrating our factual knowledge of nature. Techniques of systemic analysis used by ecologists are also expanding to include economic, social and political systems. The word "comparative" appears more frequently, attached to such studies as literature, linguistics, and anatomy, and its sister word, "interdisciplinary", has almost become academically respectable. While we explore such new possibilities, we are also trying to remember those techniques once practiced by our species to accommodate themselves to natural and spiritual wilderness: complex rituals of ancient and modern hunting cultures, transcendental meditation, oriental mysticism, communion with animals and plants. It is helpful to know that many creatures of our own species have found ways to accommodate themselves to the diversity of wilderness, as we now must.

Left-brained linear thinkers are in for some hard times. Those who persist in believing that they live in a garden will find their carrots veering off to join or intersect the lettuce,

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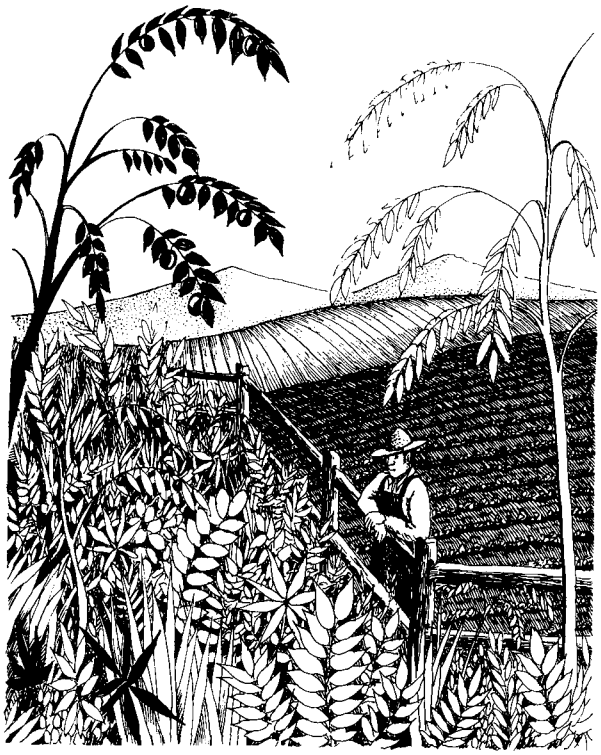

while weeds and animals from the forest insinuate themselves through the slackening fencewire. No one thing can any longer be treated in isolation. Whether we like it or not, the world is a systemic complex in which each element can be understood only if its relationships to the whole are discovered. Life in such a wilderness will require all the brain there is, not just that part that thrives on analytical divisions. People and their institutions must learn to accommodate the whole brain in a whole world.

The linear left has long ruled education. Academic fields have been cultivated as monocultures devoted to the nourishment of isolated truths. Departments sprout wherever some clever professor can manage to sever the linkages of his subject sufficiently to persuade others that he has found a new particle deserving of special attention. Universities have become high-rise department complexes where everybody lives alone. Entering students choose their department and spend the rest of their lives decorating its walls. Within the departments, objectivity is cultivated, subjectivity shunned. Language and mathematics are cleansed of their mystery and taught as if they were precision tools useful for slicing experience into chewable bites. Frogs are dissected in laboratories and their parts named and measured with no thought for the wonder of living and dying which their bodies signify; music and poetry receive the same treatment in arts classes. Information is treated as if it were knowledge.

Ultimately, a pattern emerges which makes the world seem regular, at least during classtime. Sex seems rational in the biology lab even if it doesn't during the passions of a Saturday night date. Political science is scientific when discussed by professors even if not when practiced by politicians. Successful education provides students with orderly structures to tame and domesticate the wilderness of everyday life and creates the illusion of mastery over it. Thoughtful people, both teachers and students, know that academic orderliness is a fiction which accounts for only part of their experience. The fiction is easily accepted; it has come to seem reasonable that education must lie a lot in order to achieve useful truths.

Meanwhile, the right brain with its synthetic capabilities proceeds untended. Its functions usually survive relatively unscathed through high school, then begin to atrophy on the way towards a bachelor's degree, and are frequently overwhelmed during the quest for a Ph.D. Once education has worked its full will upon a mind, little is left but analytic consciousness. The doctoral mentality can sunder without needing unity, can think without feeling, and can identify itself with one category of knowledge to the exclusion of all others. So prepared, it is declared fit to teach other minds.

Professors often explain their specializations as a necessary and natural consequence of the sophisticated state of modern knowledge. No one is any longer capable, they claim, of mastering the enormous mountains of information available to modern thinkers. It is therefore necessary to concentrate one's attention on a very small topic and to contribute to a collective product called "the sum of human knowledge"—about which no human can hope to know much. Specialists deposit their new information in academic publications and in computer banks where it will be available to others who may be interested, usually other specialists working in the same small field. The likes of Leonardo and other broadly informed Renaissance men will not come again, they say with small sadness and some smugness, because knowledge just isn't that simple any longer.

This argument is persuasive to anyone who has tried to complete the curriculum of an academic specialty and discovered how much information is required to win a credential. Like building one's own house, it is something most people can find the stomach for only once in a lifetime. But perhaps the pain and effort required by modern education are not consequences of too much knowledge, but of too little meaningful synthesis linking information into intelligible relationships. Perhaps, too, we have underestimated the capacity of the human brain because we have recognized only its left half, the bits-and-pieces part of it.

Great quantities of information cause confusion, but understanding is often simple. Those polio researchers of a few decades ago labored through awesome stacks of facts until suddenly the facts achieved unity and became simple enough to yield to an inexpensive and easily prepared vaccine. Darwin accomplished a relatively simple synthesis of the chaotic facts concerning the development of living systems with his com-

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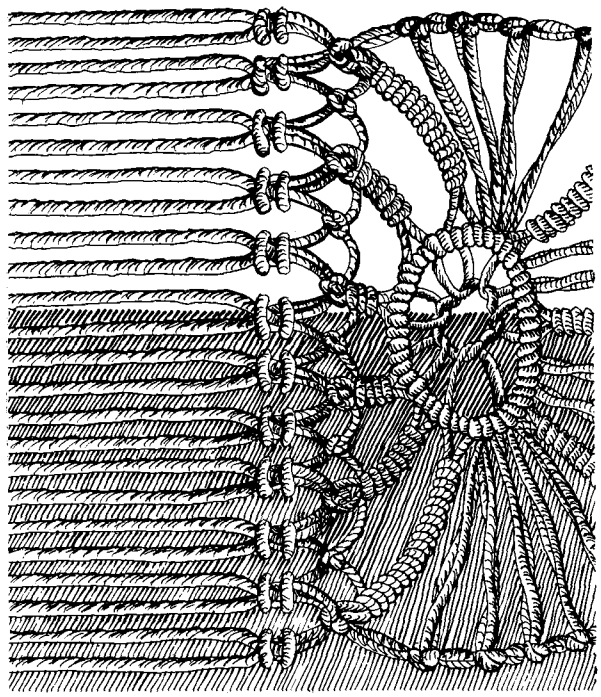

prehensive theory of evolution, much to the wonderment of those nineteenth century biologists who were drowning in their information pools. Scientists know that explanatory theories are always simple compared to the complicated factual research which precedes them. The same principle applies also to great works of art. A million myopic Elizabethan writers had to produce their squinting works before a Shakespeare brought synthetic vision to his time with a few plays which saw it all at once. Thomistic medieval scholars, debating angels upon pinheads, were similarly rendered irrelevant by Dante's *Comedy*.

When intellectuals are found to be overwhelmed by the abundance and complexity of their pursuits, it is a fairly clear sign that they do not understand their work. Economists, political theorists, cancer researchers, philosophers, ecologists, and most university scholars are in such a state today. Facts are everywhere, but they fail to come together. Perhaps that is inevitable when minds are confronted with as many new questions as our time provides. Linear factual knowledge must accumulate in the labeled bins of the left brain for a long time before its integrating threads can be woven together into a colorful whole cloth by the right brain.

The trouble is that education, hooked as it is to linear functions, fails to encourage right-brained weavers. Balanced mentalities are easiest to find among those who have never attended universities or who have recovered from their influence through several years of post-educational living in larger contexts. By denying higher education to some people—women, racial minorities, the poor—we have managed to keep their right brains in working order, even though they may lack status, power, or adequate learning. The left brain's dream of social unity arising from universal higher education has never been realized. That may be the luckiest break we've had in recent centuries. Those who are innocent of universities and those who have convalesced from their effects are perhaps the best hope for the future of higher education.

The left brain thinks that isolation is a necessary condition for the proper conduct of education. Thus universities are found in sturdy buildings set apart from the affairs of their surrounding communities. Within them, further subdivision occurs to assure that departments will seldom speak to one another, administrators will not fraternize with professors, and students will keep in separate compartments the various products of their studies. Institutions of education are visible projections of a culture's epistemological beliefs. They give concrete form to the theory of knowledge that is currently accepted. Our universities reflect the tortured orderliness of many left hemispheres working for centuries to subdivide and classify human knowledge into linear patterns arranged hierarchically for easy administration and intellectual efficiency. They are no longer merely collections of fields where academic farmers raise special crops, but agricultural industries engineered for high yields at whatever cost to the soil beneath them.

But knowledge, like the biological environment, is naturally a wilderness. Neither knowledge nor wilderness is chaotic, but both are complex enough to look disorderly from the perspective of a left brain. The wilderness environment in which our species evolved shaped our brains to cope with complexity by providing elaborate digital and analog computers side by side in the brain, linked with a multi-channel communications network. The programs for this computer system were written long before either farms or universities were invented. Genuine education must recognize and nourish that whole ancient system.

The old idea that primitive human beings were mentally simpler than those blessed with civilization now looks like mere civilized chauvinism. Recent attention to the modes of life and thought common among ancient and modern hunting peoples has revealed them to be highly complex. Primitive mental life is characterized by extensive factual knowledge of nature integrated with emotional and metaphysical values and expressed through scientific, religious and artistic forms which correlate systems of human and non-human nature into a compatible whole.

Mircea Eliade, a great scholar of ancient religions, says that modern people differ from their ancient ancestors because moderns are utterly incapable of experiencing the organic aspects of life (e.g., nutrition and sex) for their full sacramental meanings. Food and sex become merely fuel and fun to sophisticated people who believe they can explain both as "merely"

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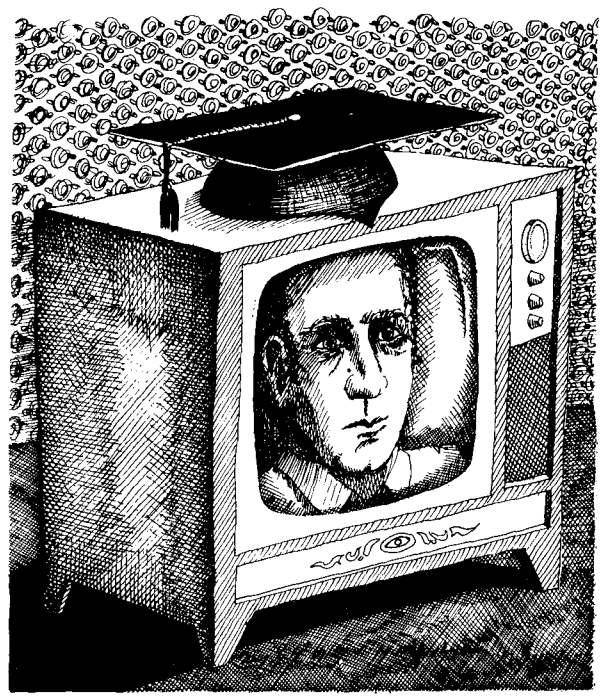

the biological requirements of normal organisms. To the primitive, food represents the mystery of life nourishing itself through death and the miracle of transforming another life form into the power of one's own personal body. Sex is the essential confrontation with Otherness and therefore the root experience necessary for significant relationships of every kind. Both symbolize the interpenetration of humans with nature and of humans among themselves.

Food and sex speak to both the left and right brains of all peoples, primitive or civilized, but among us their messages often seem contradictory and incompatible with our analytical knowlege. A gynecologist friend of mine lamented that his daily analysis of female genitalia during medical training nearly destroyed his sexual interest in women. His analytical studies lacked any connection to emotional or spiritual realities. However detailed his scientific information about sex may have been, his understanding of it was simpler than that of many witch doctors because it was exclusively analytical. His capacity to make love returned gradually as he recovered from the over-simplifying influence of his professional education.

Many Eskimo hunters can identify more plant and animal species and have a more thorough understanding of tundra ecosystems than Ph.D's in arctic biology. Sahelian natives of northern Africa were successful managers of their arid ecosystems for ten thousand years before European agricultural specialists arrived with "improvements" which rapidly destroyed their ancient balanced systems. Primitive people typically respond to their environments with all their senses and all their minds—as one would expect, since brains, like other organs, have evolved in response to natural environmental influences. Science, religion and art are names for mental and social processes which evolved to adapt humans to their natural environments. All require both analytical and synthetic mental abilities. Mental simplification is a recent invention, the products of which are to be found among civilized people who have subjected themselves to the artificially limited disciplines of modern education.

When Carlos Castaneda, the gifted graduate student, meets Don Juan, the Yaqui Indian in Castaneda's novel, there is no doubt which one possesses the more complex mentality. Both men inherited from their ancestors a whole brain which reached its present evolutionary size and structure some fifty thousand years ago. The brain has not changed much since then. Carlos appears naive and stupid because he has had the misfortune to live in a cultural and educational environment which deliberately met only half of his mental requirements. There is some hope for him only because he is still able to yearn for education of the other half, and because Don Juan is still around to provide it. There may not be much time left before whole brains become too scarce and left brains forget that they need help.

Universities could help to restore equilibrium between the brain's two hemispheres. The necessary therapy, like polio vaccine, may be obvious and simple once the ailment has been understood. For starters, we could assume that education should be so structured as to resemble the structure of the human brain and other characteristic forms of nature. Perhaps if universities resembled wilderness ecosystems, then the whole brain might participate in the learning process.

To restore wilderness to education, it is necessary to ventilate those intellectual, administrative, and architectural walls erected by existing universities. Robert Frost's "something there is that doesn't love a wall" is really the right brain yearning for permeability in a world dominated by isolating structures. Intellectual disciplines and categories of knowledge tend to flow into one another unless prevented by artificial barriers. Rather than impeding such flows, universities should recognize and encourage them. They might, for instance, provide for some students and professors to work increasingly beyond their fields of specialization as their maturity grows. Young professors can perhaps be expected to know only one subject well, but if they remain with that subject for an entire career they often become intellectual cripples. Rather than spending an entire life in a single discipline in order to move from instructor to full professor, some teachers should advance by moving into new disciplines, increasing their worth and understanding at each step. Students could pass through several majors in the same way. Poets, artists, shamans, and others of right-brained disposition should be free to move within the intellectual community rather than

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being attached as token showpieces to academic departments. Poets are no more comfortable in English departments than saints are in faculties of theology.

Academic administrators have generally been chosen from among the left-brained faculty, partly because such people are orderly and dependable and can cope with budgets and committee work without cracking up. They are also good with charts and rules which good with charts and rules which establish clear responsibilities and regulate university affairs. There is room, however, for poetry and other complex systems as well as for prose and hierarchies in university administration. It is even possible to imagine non-hierarchical systemic structures for university administration which might be compatible with the nature of human knowledge and with the public interest. Wilderness structures have worked for vastly longer than the simpler agricultural and mechanical structures customarily used as models for university administration.

Walls of concrete or brick are no more essential to education than are departmental barriers. Education has long suffered from an edifice complex, neurotically erecting monuments to itself which have little to do with learning. If the main purpose of education is to generate knowledge and to communicate it to citizens, then buildings full of classrooms, labs, and lounges are probably not its best medium of expression. Knowledge can be loosed from its academic vaults and set free among the streets and homes of all people thanks to the elaborate media of communication available in our time. Some mutual accommodation should be possible between the public media, which now have little to say, and the universities, which need new ways to speak what they know.

There is some danger in this. Everyone knows what happened to Socrates when he insisted upon teaching in the streets of Athens. Plato was clever enough to avoid hemlock for himself and Socrates' other heirs by establishing his university at a distance from the public eye in the Grove of Academe. Universities since then have prudently hidden themselves from public view rather than risk the accusations of heresy that learning always generates. Now, however, the need for public learning seems to outweigh the need to keep knowledge in secret. Education henceforth will have to take its chances in the streets with little protection from the castle walls it has so painstakingly built.

The brief but gloomy history of public education through television, radio and other mass media gives little reason to hope that education could survive in the open even if it were liberated from its buildings. The same drab lecture that bores students in clasrooms also bores home viewers who have the power to end it all by turning a knob. Education has long lacked art, and its captive audiences have been too helpless and unsure of their values to demand well-formed teaching. Public education must somehow reconcile the principles of good scholarship and gship and good theater. It will require all of the synthesizing and creative powers the right brain can muster to make genuine learning an interesting and deep experience. Left-brained educators working alone cannot do the job, but some cooperative work with right-brained art and imagination might just bring educational media to life.

Lecturing by authoritative experts may soon be little more than a memory from the past. For one thing, experts have erred too often to retain their former credibility. Scholars who know their special topics in great depth can no longer be trusted to provide dependable insight because they seldom know how their specialties relate to anything else. Sophisticated economists consistently fail to predict the environmental impacts of their programs because they are ignorant of basic biology, just as microbiologists are ignorant of economics. Expertise is useless and destructive unless it connects with a full and meaningful context, and that is what experts lack most.

Further, the political psychology of education has changed in ways that deprive experts of their former authoritative pedestals. Priestly power is no longer possible to maintain even in conventional universities with relatively docile students, and it will surely not survive exposure in public. The tradition of lecturing is based largely upon the assumption that One Who Knows is revealing his truths to those who lack knowledge and so are willing to sit at his feet. A new assumption is now emerging: professors should differ from students because they are masters of the arts of learning, not merely because they possess learning's end products. The *processes* of learning must be taught, and this is seldom possible through lectures. Beginners must share in the stages of discovery with

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skilled teachers, and that means that they must work, talk and argue together. Lecturing isolates, while cooperative studies connect things; lectures teach information, while joint explorations teach the process of thinking.

With the help of the right brain's synthesizing powers, learning could become an experience of the world's completeness rather than a demonstration of the mind's isolation from the world. Permeable mental and physical structures would permit knowledge to do what it does best, to flow energetically among minds and kinds of information, gathering strands of feeling and fact until a newly integrated form is achieved. Able thinkers have long had to educate themselves in spite of universities by internally organizing their private programs of interdisciplinary studies to synthesize the separate products of many classroom experiences. Intellectual creativity of all kinds requires that unlikely connections must be made and explored according to the dictates of emotion, fact, and logic before a synthesizing discovery can occur. Since creative minds seem to work this way, why shouldn't creative universities be structured similarly?

God and DNA are interdisciplinary, as are the systems of natural wilderness. Natural structures rarely exhibit the kinds of isolated information that have become characteristic of universities. Instead, cells have permeable walls, flowers and bees cooperate to achieve pollination, nervous systems communicate with reproductive and digestive systems, ocean and atmosphere interchange their substances, and left brains are linked intimately to their right counterparts. No sharp lines separate such functions unless they are artificially drawn and arbitrarily imposed. Scholarship that is consistent with the overlapping and interchanging structures of natural systems will be consistent with the normal structures of the human brain.

Ambidextrous education requires that both hemispheres of the brain must be valued highly and nourished equally, and that both must become thoroughly proficient at what they do best. Precise analysis and sharply-focused logic are needed if we hope to understand things, and so are broad synthesis and depths of feeling. There is no need to enthrone the right brain where the left brain once reigned, but only to create a climate for coalition in which both hemispheres can achieve the balance that was long ago provided for by evolutionary history. A whole earth now demands that the human mind become whole. □

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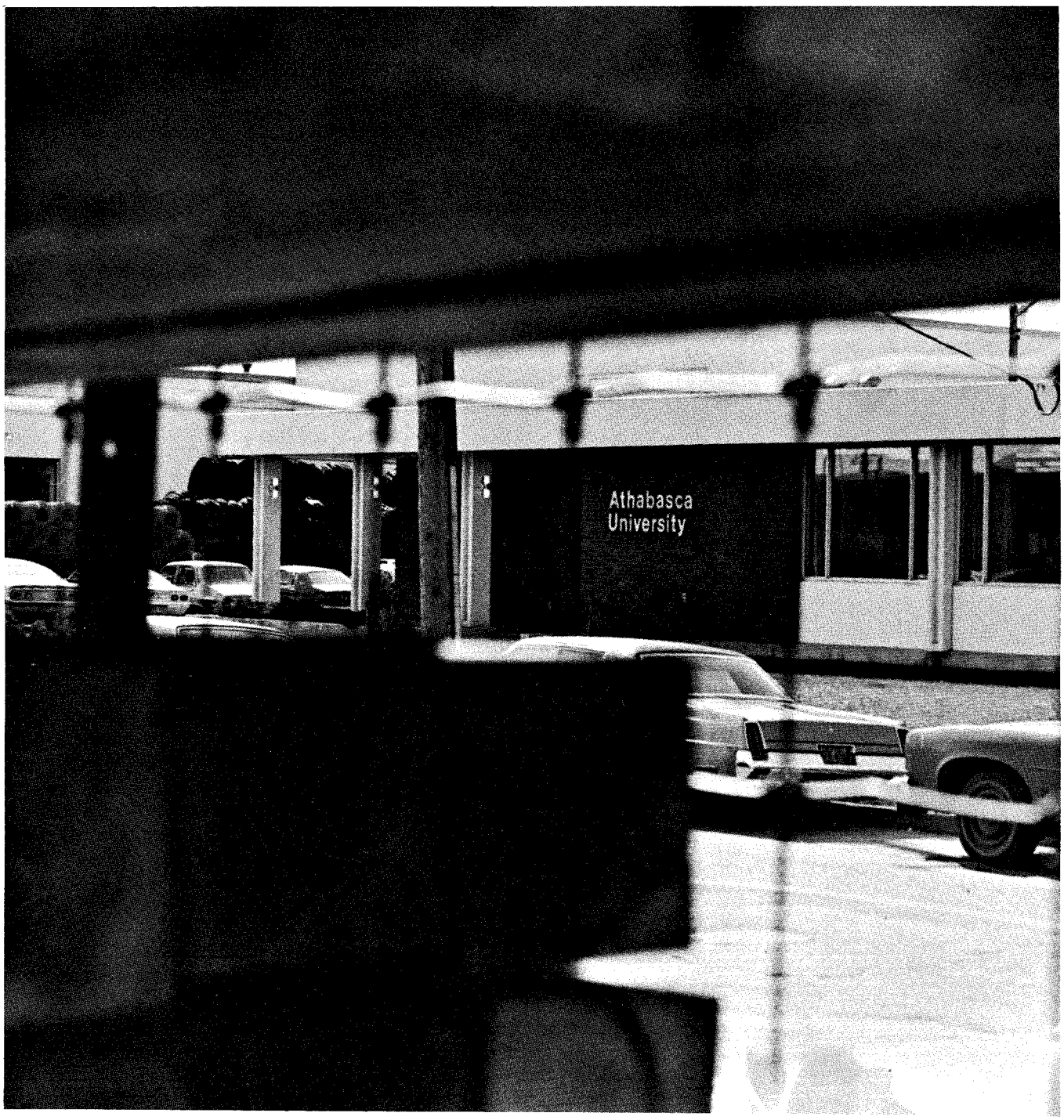
J. M. Richmond and M. G. Hamilton

Athabasca University

Ambidextrous Education at Work



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In 1972 an experiment was initiated in Canada which could have widespread implications for higher education in North America. After investigating such innovative university programs as those offered at Green Bay, Wisconsin, Santa Cruz, California, Syracuse, N.Y., Peterborough, Ontario, and several British institutions (including the Open University), the Governing Authority of Athabasca University in Edmonton, Alberta, embarked on a pilot program which established Athabasca as an open university—an experiment in expanding educational boundaries temporally, spatially, and intellectually. Founded on the premise that an educational system, like an ecosystem, ought to involve dynamic interaction between individuals and their surroundings, Athabasca has moved away from the traditional model of the university that operates in a closed, self-contained environment—the "fenced garden" Joseph Meeker speaks of in the preceding article—and is attempting to integrate education into the larger community context. Athabasca concentrates on developing a non-resident, student-centered instructional system designed specifically for the adult who has traditionally been alienated from formal education. By knocking down the protective fences and opening the university to all students, no matter what their educational background, financial circumstances, or geographic location, Athabasca hopes to make learning a lifelong process and a pleasure.

Clearly, to involve adults in higher education requires more than the simple extension of existing programs and procedures to places where the student is living and working. An open university must offer educational experiences which link learning more closely to life in the "real world" and help the student solve the problems that arise from living in the complex, rapidly changing environment of modern technological society—one argument for continuing education being that it is essential to survival in a wilderness world where knowledge is in a constant state of flux and the need to update one's learning is perpetual. To assist students in their own struggle for survival, Athabasca has developed an educational system which operates on ecological principles to provide both the medium and the message: with the least possible disruption of the student's existing life space and style, the Athabasca system makes easier the dual and simultaneous activities of acquiring knowledge and of learning how to learn.

During these first two years, Athabasca's program has drawn students from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. Doctors, dentists, farmers, forest rangers, housewives, laborers, secretaries, the retired and the unemployed—all have been attracted to the Athabasca liberal arts program. Although ages range from about 18 to 90, 35 is the average. Most of the students have completed secondary school, but they have gone no further and have been away from formal education for 15 or 20 years. The majority wish to follow a degree program, but a significant number are taking Athabasca courses purely for interest and personal development.

Typically (if the word can be used when speaking about a remarkably heterogeneous group), the Athabasca student has not previously participated in the established university system, and although he recognizes the necessity for further education, he cannot or will not give up current personal commitments to self, family, and community. Thus Athabasca has had to evolve a new student-university relationship, based on the principle of open and dynamic interaction.

Entrance into the Athabasca system is easy; there are no formal admission requirements, nor fixed time limits on courses or programs. A student enters whenever he likes and proceeds at his own pace. He is not obliged to study a fixed number of courses at any particular time, but may temporarily interrupt his studies or drop out at his convenience. If he wishes, because of the way courses are structured, he may gain partial credit for completing smaller individual sections of a course.

Attendance at Athabasca University does not require residency. There is no campus in the traditional sense: no separate lecture halls or faculty buildings. Instead, the learning materials are delivered to students in their homes or at work. The real campus is situated wherever the student finds it convenient to study. This has allowed the university to attract students from all corners of the province, from other parts of Canada, and even from Europe. Isolation is no barrier to "attendance" at Athabasca—the bush pilot in the North West Territories and the receptionist in Edmonton now have equal opportunity for a university education. Similarly, although most Athabasca students are fairly average members of the normal community, who study in their own homes or places of business, others have more eccentric life styles, communicating with Athabasca from prisons, hospitals, and even more conventional universities. The university assumes that legal problems or confinement to an iron lung are no reasons why education should come to a halt.

It also encourages its students to make learning just one more activity in their everyday life. Many have taken this encouragement quite literally, listening to their cassette tapes while they milk the cows, or watching Athabasca television programs as they take their after-dinner coffee.

As part of its effort to enter the student's environment, to

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draw education out of the garden and into the wilderness both literally and figuratively, Athabasca tries whenever possible to utilize existing local facilities for meeting with students. Libraries, high schools, church halls, and community buildings throughout Alberta are used for small group discussions and larger assemblies, and serve as community learning resource centers where Athabasca materials are made available to students and the public at large. To make it easier to contact students in remote areas, the university hopes to establish a mobile unit, a communications and learning center on wheels.

In keeping with a commitment to "ambidextrous education", education that will nourish both the analytic left hemisphere of the brain and its intimate partner, the synthetic right, Athabasca University has expanded and blurred the boundaries of the traditional disciplines. Believing that there is an unfortunate parallel between the compartmentalization of disciplines and the opposition frequently made between education and life, the university is developing courses and programs of an interdisciplinary nature. Without rejecting traditional subject matter, Athabasca is attempting to make education more relevant to modern society, involving students in themes, problems, and experiences which will help them cope with the 20th century technological wilderness. By mixing traditional discipline-based courses with innovative interdisciplinary ones, Athabasca hopes to take students beyond narrow vocational and occupational concerns and to help them develop their own ambidextrous or multi-dimensional responses. It is anticipated that eventually each student's program will contain custom-made self-directed courses, conceived and executed by the student himself with the assistance of the university's resources and support.

An individualized student program is the key to bringing together the disciplinary, interdisciplinary and self-directed courses. Students bring to the university their own peculiar set of needs associated with personal interests, vocational ambitions, family situation, and the necessity to understand and relate to the physical, social, and spiritual systems of their natural environment. The university aims to increase knowledge, change attitudes, and improve communication and learning skills. In a process analogous to the mathematical combination of two vectors, the student's individual needs and the university's objectives interact to produce the student program: a unique program tailored to a unique student.

In its interdisciplinary focus, Athabasca has rejected the honeycomb structures of the traditional department and faculty. In their place are four larger discipline-based divisions or fields of study: Social Sciences, Humanities, Environmental Sciences, and Professional Studies. Each field is under the direction of a Senior Tutor. Unlike the majority of department chairmen and faculty deans in conventional universities, the Senior Tutor is much more than an isolated administrator. He is first the leader of the adademic team responsible for the intellectual content of courses in his broad disciplinary area, and he is a member of the larger team of varied personnel who cooperate to develop and deliver these courses. The Senior Tutor is also involved with the teams in other disciplines, particularly when they are working on interdisciplinary courses.

At a more fundamental level, Athabasca University has also rejected the traditional hierarchical administrative structure in which communication is channelled vertically within faculties. Except at the uppermost echelons, few mechanisms in this structure encourage horizontal flow between individual departments in separate faculties, or indeed even within the same faculty. Cooperation between, for example, history and philosophy departments is often difficult, and between philosophy and biology departments virtually unheard of. Athabasca has replaced this restrictive administrative structure with a functional arrangement, an "ecological" network of interacting subsystems which combine into a university system that allows—and in fact encourages—cooperative planning, development, production, and delivery of courses.

Two structures have emerged like vortices within the larger system that is Athabasca University: the Academic Council and the Course Team. Both serve to concentrate organizational energies and originate materials for the overall instructional system. The Academic Council is the principal planning and policy-making body for all matters related to the academic programs of the university. Its policies are carried out by Course Teams responsible for the immediate planning, preparing, and packaging of the instructional materials for individual courses. Intellectual content is prepared by the Senior Tutor or other designated expert, usually with the assistance of a panel of external academic consultants. The same panel or other selected experts may act as special editors to screen course materials for technical accuracy. Researchers, instructional developers, visual designers, editors, and various support staff produce a series of prototype instructional "packages" which are then pre-tested and revised as necessary before being released to students.

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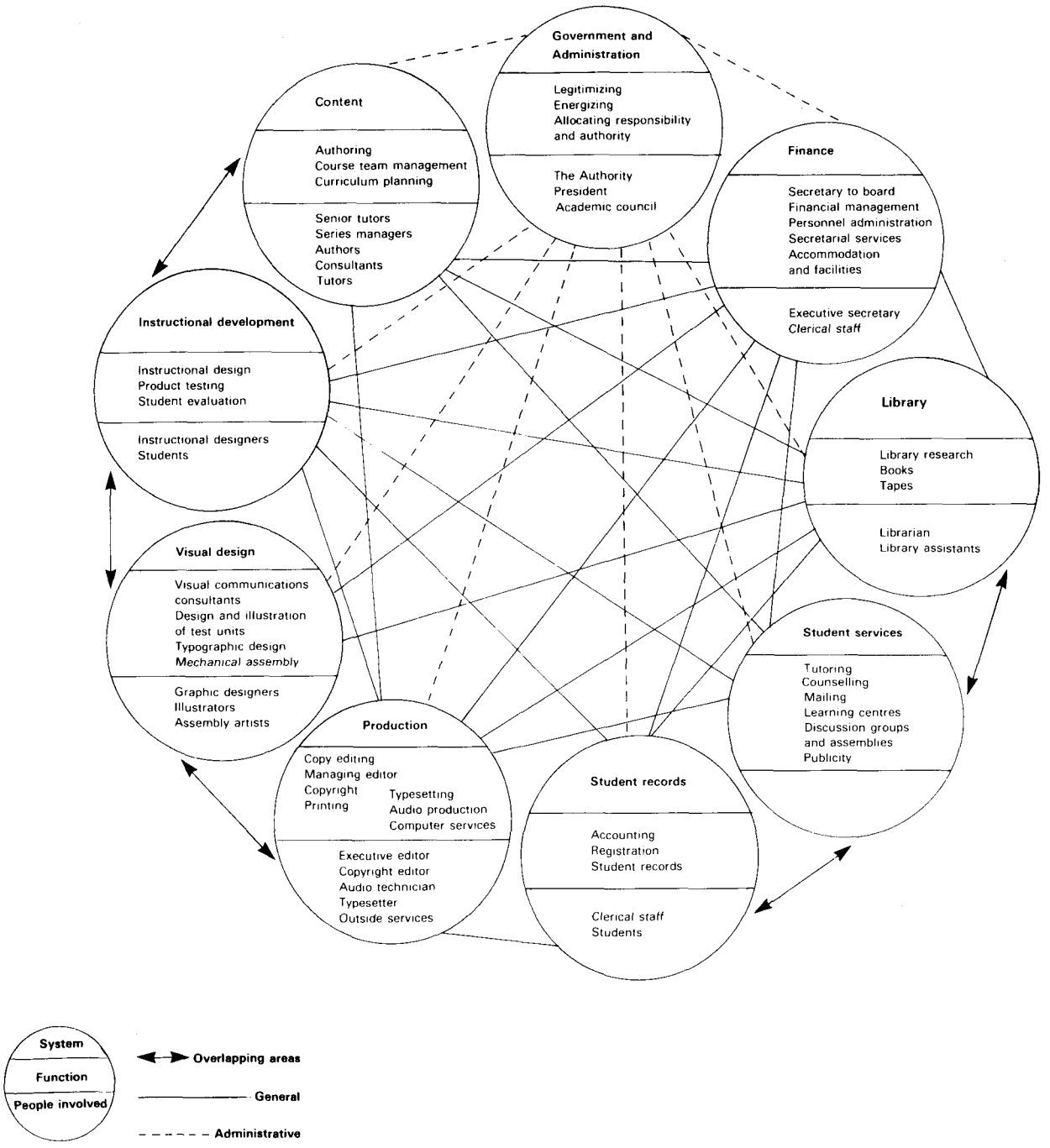
Functional organization within Athabasca University



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The package and the underlying rationale of each course reflect Athabasca's effort to move higher education into the 20th century. Perhaps more than other educational institutions, universities have tended to resist modernization, not only rejecting technological aids as threats to the very existence of the human teacher, but also refusing to recognize that society can no longer afford to allow students to sponge up information passively. Although it may be quite a different matter in theory, in practice mere presentation of information often becomes more important than development of the effective and transferable skills which are basic to true knowledge because they allow the student to become his own educator. Athabasca does not deny the importance of information, but believes it can frequently be presented more efficiently through the "media" than by live instructors. Far from depersonalizing education and eliminating the human element, technology frees the instructor for more and closer contact with the students, allowing him to assist them in developing the vital transferable skills. Thus the instructional packages are mixed-media products which break out of the primarily verbal structure of traditional university education by utilizing videotape and films, as well as print and audiotape. Information is delivered to the student in a variety of ways: through texts and workbooks, individual cassette tapes, closed-circuit and commercial television, radio and newspaper.

The Course Team works to promote ambidextrous learning, to reunite the schizophrenic, split-brain, linear and synthetic personalities by creating an educational environment where both are necessary. Instead of separating the various methods and media of instruction from each other, or setting them against one another, Athabasca courses combine them to produce an interactive system. Instruction by videotape, for example, is not opposed to instruction through the written word. On the contrary, both are integrated into one package and train the student in the synthetic process which is encouraged by the need to make constant transitions from one medium to another. The interdisciplinary structuring of the content in a course promotes the same synthetic process, a constant shifting among conceptual frameworks, probing differences and seeking underlying communalities. In developing instructional systems which integrate written word, sound, and visual image, Athabasca is imitating the interactive nature of the wilderness environment, structuring an educational environment where the student learns not only the content, but also the process —that is, he learns how to learn. When he understands the process of learning, the student possesses a series of algorithmic-like operations or *schemata* he can use for synthesizing knowledge from his normal environment. This is the ultimate objective of the Athabasca instructional system; it places the emphasis not on judging performance—merely measuring the information that can be squeezed from the passive student sponge—but rather on improving performance. Failure is incompatible with a continuous education model.

Since improvement implies feedback and intervention, the Athabasca evaluation system is based on the "Mastery Model" for learning. Grades, as thought of in the traditional sense, are non-existent. A student writes a mastery test and if he scores less than the mastery criterion (let us say 80%) he is "recycled" through the instructional packages, given individualized tutor help, and provided with additional sources of information. When he is ready, he writes a second mastery test and, if successful, moves on to new material. The underlying assumption is that, given the proper conditions, any student can learn anything. All students are given equal opportunity to achieve success. The student who takes longer to learn a given unit is not automatically relegated to the bottom of the "normal curve" with a grade of C, D, or F. Instead, he is given the time he needs and the opportunity to earn an A along with the other students.

As adults studying in their home environments, Athabasca students are subject to stresses not generally experienced by younger students in conventional universities. All the usual demands of family, friends, work, and community impinge on them as they fit their education into an already crowded day. To make this a little easier for them, Athabasca provides a number of services designed to help the students become more involved in their courses. These support services assist the student in developing tactics for independent learning; almost all of them are optional and provided only when requested by the students. They include private in-home and telephone tutoring, small group discussions, interdisciplinary mini-assemblies, and larger conference-type general assemblies, as well as personalized assistance through letters and tapes. The university also offers student orientation services, individual counseling, and a university newspaper. To encourage communication and self-help at the community level, a student (or other interested person, often a teacher or librarian) is designated as local Athabasca organizer. The final stage in the Athabasca educational system comes when the student has mastered the process of independent learning. At this point, the university support services become simply another resource to be used in the quest for continuing education. Based

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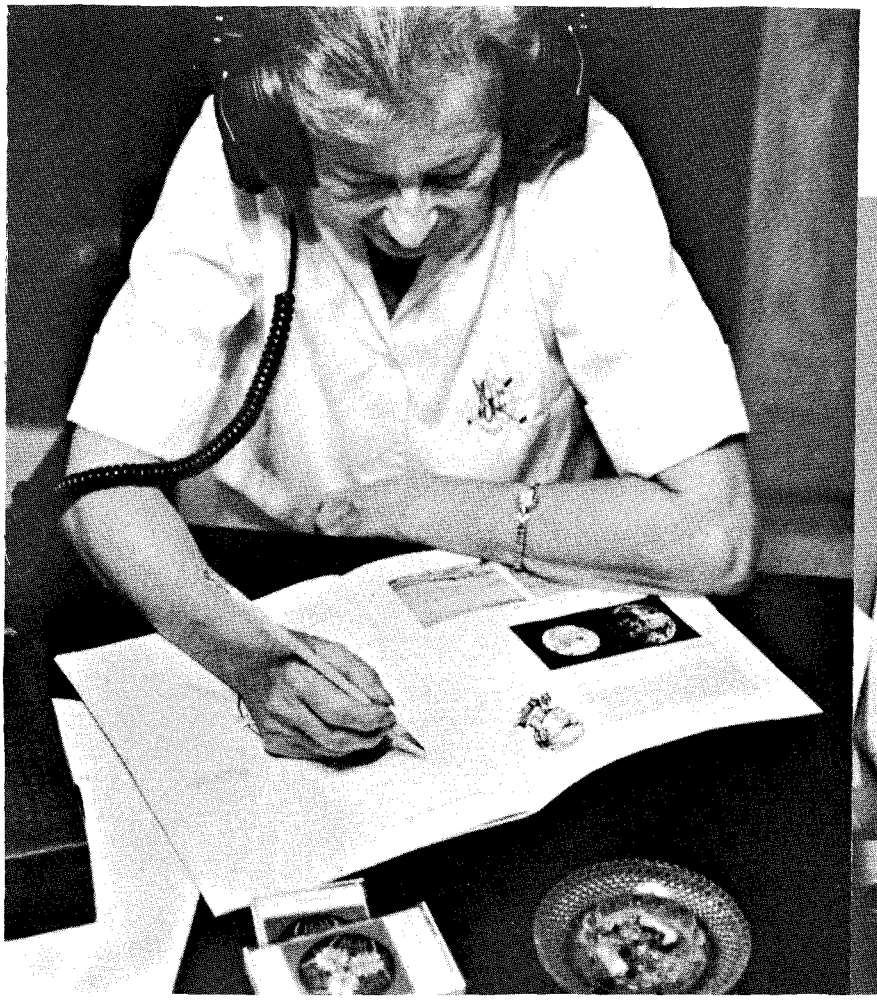

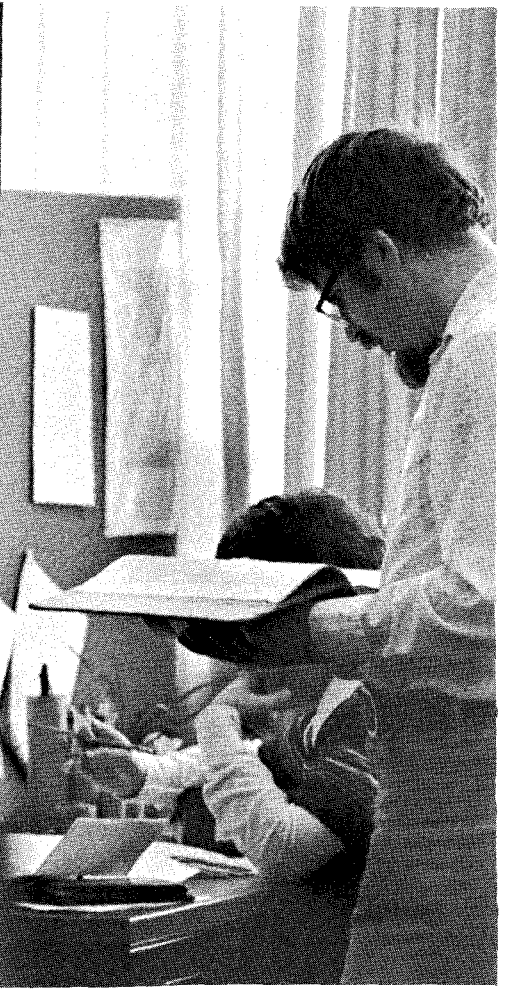

on ecological principles, this Athabasca education is both liberal and liberating, for it frees the student from the master-slave relationship traditionally established with his teachers.

The very existence of Athabasca University is a sign of changing attitudes toward education. In the past, the typical student in a traditional university has come straight from secondary school and been locked into a limbo, a never-never land of extended adolescence, the final fantasy stage that precedes entrance into the reality of employment and responsibility. Today young people are more and more frequently rejecting this old pattern and going directly from high school into the job market. At the same time, many adults are returning to university and other post-secondary institutions, some to upgrade their educational certificates, others simply out of general interest and for their own personal satisfaction. Athabasca's existence is a symptom of the growing recognition that education doesn't stop when the individual enters the work force or becomes a housewife; indeed, that education must not stop then or society will suffer, growing stagnant and empty. Athabasca is trying to merge education with the future by producing students able to cope with unknown circumstances because they know how to use the information resources at hand and how to intervene to influence that future. □

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Jottings on a Sample Course: Ancient Roots of The Modern World

Because Athabasca is still in the pilot program stage, it has only a limited number of courses currently available to students. These include: World Ecology; The Scientific Context; Introduction to the Study of Human Communities; and Ancient Roots of the Modern World. Several other courses are under production; all are multimedia presentations in which the printed word and image are integrated with the electronic.

Ancient Roots of the Modern World serves as a good example of how an Athabasca course is planned, developed, and delivered. In this introductory Humanities course, through translations of written literature, the student approaches several of the ancient cultures which, by their religion, philosophy, and aesthetics have helped shape the modern world. The course is divided into four major sections: 1) Mesopotamian, Hebrew, and Greek cultures; 2) Rome and early Christianity; 3) India; 4) China.

After the initial planning stages, it took a little over one year to produce Ancient Roots. Its development began when the Senior Tutor in Humanities, Dr. Joseph Meeker, set up the basic course outline. Academic consultants (in this case from the Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Religious Studies departments at the nearby University of Alberta) were then selected and the detailed planning for each unit began. This was a co-operative effort involving the Senior Tutor, the consultants, and an instructional developer.

The major focus in the Ancient Roots course is on the original works studied. Around the texts, videotape programs and record books are built, one of each per unit. In the past, much university experimentation with television has been disappointing: amateur productions of canned lectures given by professors totally naive of the medium have usually been greeted with student boredom. Taking this into consideration, Athabasca decided to seek professional help and try a new format. The Alberta government had recently established the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation (ACCESS). They agreed to cooperate with the university, supplying a director (who became part of the course development team), studios at T.V. North in Edmonton, technical crew, and dubbing services. ACCESS also arranged for distribution of the programs on commercial television throughout the province.

In an attempt to move towards a more stimulating and student-centered presentation, and at the same time to allow for more effective use of standard television techniques, Athabasca chose a discussion group format for the Ancient Roots videotapes. Each program centers on a particular study unit and the literary work that forms its core. Four "students" discuss the material with the Senior Tutor. In fact, the students are professional actors chosen for their ability to discuss carefully rehearsed topics in what appears to be a fresh, extemporaneous manner. They were asked to function much as a real-life student would, reading and thinking about the works on their own before coming together for rehearsal-seminars. Here themes and issues judged important by the actor/students, together with those isolated earlier by the preliminary course team, were discussed at length. From this session evolved an open working script in the form of a detailed topic outline and cue sheet. This became the basis for a short rehearsal and the taping of the actual program. When necessary, retakes were made of segments or entire programs.

The record book for each unit revolves around an edited transcript of the videotaped program. Typically, the record book opens with a brief introduction to the work or authors under consideration. It presents a number of preliminary questions designed to alert the student to some of the significant aspects of the material to be studied. In the ideal situation, the student reads the text, then views the videotaped program with a small group of fellow students so that live discussion may continue from where the television presentation leaves off. For those unable to attend the videotape viewing session, or to catch the programs on commercial television or radio, audiotapes are available to supplement the printed transcripts provided for reference in the record books. The latter also contain questions on the text and videotape discussion, suggested themes for personal journal reflection, supplementary bibliography, and topics for essays. Students are required to submit an essay after completion of each unit. This is a particularly important aspect of the course, for it helps the students become intellectually "ambidextrous": topics are chosen that require both analytic and synthetic ability. Assignments that give students the opportunity to try their hand at artistic composition complement more traditional tasks: in addition to conventional essays, students are encouraged to write imitations of specific authors or genres studied. The course tutor evaluates the papers, commenting in detail on them in order to assist the student in developing and

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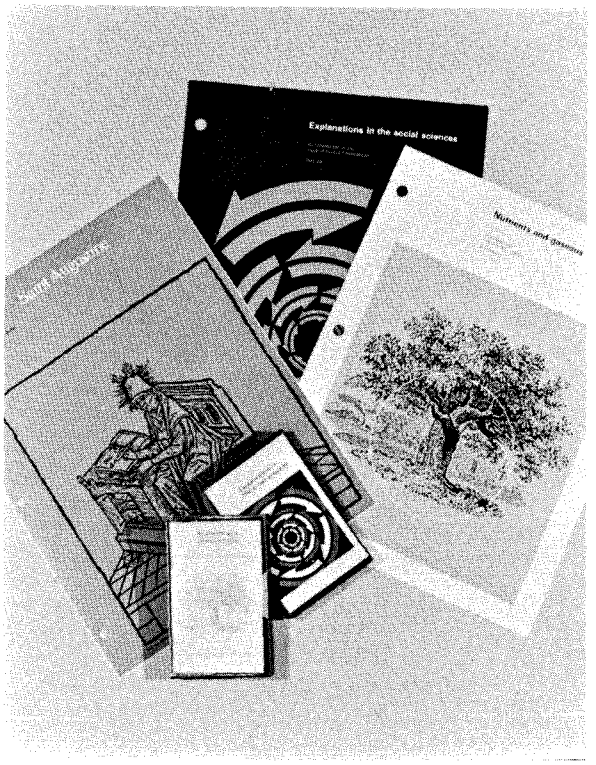

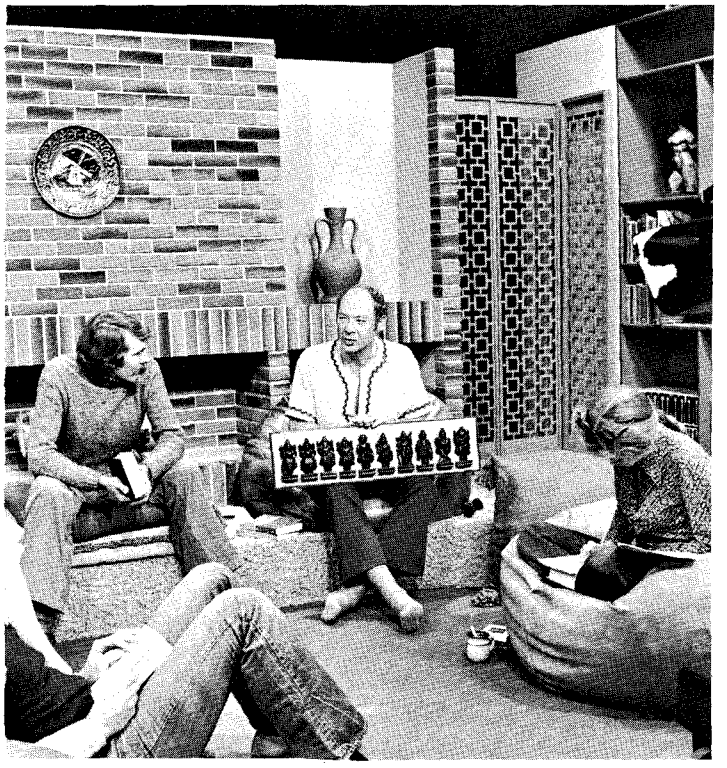

improving such skills as critical reading and analysis, imaginative lateral thinking, logical and coherent expression.

At all times the major responsibility for completing the course work lies with the student. Athabasca does, however, place expert assistance at his disposal. This includes tutors to lead small group discussions and to assist students who wish to make their contact by mail or telephone. The telephone tutor is accessible 24 hours a day through a telephone answering device, and may also conduct long distance group discussions by means of conference calls. Students are encouraged to supplement tutor aid with self-help, to take the initiative by organizing and conducting their own discussion groups. Although student shyness and lack of self-confidence tended to delay implementation of this aspect of the course in its early months, there is evidence of increasing student interaction and mutual support. This seems an especially popular approach to the course in smaller, more isolated communities.

There have, of course, been many difficulties with the development and delivery of Ancient Roots of the Modern World, not least of which are the almost baffling problems in approach and logistics created by the great variety in the educational backgrounds of the students, the multitude of different stages of study that result from self-pacing, and the geographic isolation of many of the course members. On the other hand, student reaction to the course has been most rewarding. Although the almost inevitable voices have been raised in criticism, they are quite definitely in the minority. In general, student response has been extremely favorable to both the content and format of the course. Enthusiasm is contagiously high: one member of the videotape cast has even enrolled to work her way through the material a second time. It is still too early to proclaim the Ancient Roots experiment an unqualified success: its value can be judged only after there has been a full run of several years and a crop of completed student course files. Nonetheless, the feedback from students so far has been gratifying and suggests a promising future for the course.

—J. M. Richmond and M. G. Hamilton

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STUART AND MICHAEL

By John C. Hall

It was just like Stuart to put things in his letters like the light streaming between the curtains or the cats sleeping on the sill. It was morning, usually, when he wrote. Sitting at the kitchen table he typed letters to all his friends and these niceties helped him say what he said. More than anything he wanted everyone to know who he was and the cats were one of his means, a means of contrast. The cats lay in the sun in perfect innocence and bliss; but Stuart was in perfect anguish. He didn't hide it, in fact he wanted to show his friends and everyone he knew how low he could feel. They were just as low, just as lost as himself. Everyone thought they were alone in the world but Stuart knew better, he knew how much better it would be if they only realized one another. The cats contrasted the way he and all people felt. The cats didn't worry about a thing but Stuart was afraid. For one thing he was afraid of women, actually of touching a woman. He lived with Joan in her brother's apartment building but sometimes he was terrified that she would begin touching him or want him to touch her. But he was honest about it. He didn't want there to be any secrets so he told her just how he felt and she said she understood but really she didn't understand at all. At first he had been afraid he could never satisfy her and later he became afraid ever to touch her, which was nearly impossible for her or anyone to understand. Secondly, he was afraid he was a homosexual. In his head it was all right because in fact touching men or touching women didn't matter but he couldn't help fearing it. He imagined going insane and ending up in some colony where only homosexuals lived. He imagined his father telling his mother what kind of place he lived in. He knew that physicalness, that physical lovingness was just a way, really the only way for us mere animals to show each other we are all one, to make an admission not only between men and women but also between men and men and women and women, the admission of helplessness and trust. But nevertheless he feared it and needed to say it so he wrote those things about the cats to show how low he was, how low he or anybody could feel.

Michael got lots of letters from Stuart, sometimes two a day. They were always very long and intricate and Michael understood them but sometimes Michael fastened onto things Stuart mentioned like the cats and built an entirely different picture. It didn't strike Michael particularly that Stuart meant the cats as a contrast; instead Michael was prone just to think about the cats themselves, sleeping in the sun. He imagined the sun streaming as Stuart said through the curtains, some sort of muslin with tiny red, yellow, and blue flowers printed on; he imagined Stuart at a table industriously strewn with letters and books, his elbows on either side of a heavy black typewriter, drinking coffee perhaps. Joan's brother owned the building so the rooms were cheap and probably large and white with big windows. He pictured bevelled glass in the windows throwing rainbows on the clean white walls. He thought of high ceilings and light. Stuart said the cats roamed the whole block on the rooftops.

Michael understood what Stuart meant to say by all of that. He understood that Stuart was afraid and so on but, he always thought after finishing the letter, it couldn't be all that bad. Stuart was slightly melodramatic. It seemed that Stuart wanted more to convince you of his misery than get rid of it. The cats made a bigger impression than what Stuart meant by the contrast to himself. Michael sat by his own window drinking tea and thinking about the cozy picture Stuart described.

Often when he sat at the window he sat reading the Bible. He'd read the Bible twice through in the last year and now he was reading his favorite parts and memorizing them. He didn't come from a religious family but he'd always wanted to know God, to find some evidence, and then he found it. One night he'd met some Christians who told him Christ is real, Jesus is real, and he knew by their faces it was true and he believed it and was filled. Every dark corner inside, places he never knew about, were filled with light and the dust was cleared away. They laid their hands on him and prayed in tongues and he prayed in tongues too. He was baptized in the Holy Spirit, they said. When that happened Michael wrote to Stuart and Stuart agreed it was a

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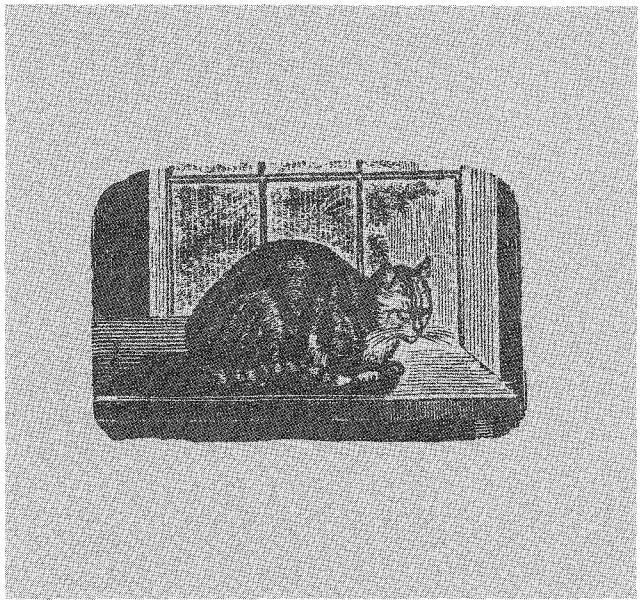
wonderful thing. Stuart said he'd believed in Christ for a long time and he knew what it meant for someone to find out how real He was. At first Michael thought Stuart would think he'd gone crazy but Stuart proved to be much more broadminded. For months they wrote letters back and forth about the Bible. Michael was surprised how well Stuart grasped the meaning of Christ because up to now he'd never said a thing. Then later when Stuart wrote about all his anguish Michael couldn't accept that it was really that bad because he knew how much less one suffered if one believed and Stuart did believe. Stuart had said what a relief it was to believe. It seemed he wanted to attract attention with so many letters and so much suffering. For a long time Michael doubted Stuart's sincerity in always talking about the pain and everybody's oneness. All this time Stuart was not very convincing because even though he had faith he had all that pain. Michael still had a great deal to learn about him.

For one thing Michael was mistaken about Stuart's apartment. Stuart typed at the kitchen table cluttered with heaping ashtrays and glasses. He drank a lot of cheap wine and set the empty bottles aside on the floor. Joan's brother owned the building and she worked so Stuart didn't have to. He helped a janitor three afternoons a week and when he needed more he called on his savings. He enjoyed not working. Once he'd wanted to be a disc jockey but now he saw that as a child's dream. He'd made some tapes and looked once or twice for a job but now he had a long red beard and



long hair and could not see cutting his beard and his hair to go off and look vainly for a job he no longer even wanted. He preferred to think about everything around him, Joan and his friends. In the evening lots of people came over and during the day he thought about all of it, what they meant to him and he to them. He wrote letters. He smoked cigarettes and drank wine sometimes. Day after day he thought about Joan and himself and his life. He thought about going back to school which seemed to him only shallow and dry. When his friends came he wanted to bring the life and blood out of them; he tried to make them say very personal or even angry things but usually it too was dead and dry.

When Michael wrote to say he'd become a Christian and how it had happened Stuart was happy; at least someone had something to be excited about for awhile. He himself knew the new washed feeling. He'd been a Christian himself for a long time and he knew what a comfort it was in the beginning. His parents, especially his mother, were very religious and he'd read all about it, about being saved. He had been saved. He well knew what a comfort it was thinking about life forever in heaven. He'd confessed out loud he believed in Christ, that He died on the cross and rose from the dead and the whole thing, so he was saved. For a long time he'd thought everyone should be saved and now Michael was telling him he should be saved but he already had been, a long time ago. He was past it now. He'd learned how to pray and so on but gradually he'd learned about other things, about Zen, about psychology. Maybe some people could remain in that naive comfort forever but he couldn't. Maybe he was the worse for it but he couldn't help seeing what he saw. He saw that Christ and reincarnation and the collective subconscious were versions of the same thing. He lost his child's view. Perhaps that was the tragedy because now as an adult he did indeed suffer but he couldn't keep his enthusiasm from dying and Michael's feeling was bound to die too after awhile. Stuart still had faith which meant he still had religion but he spent more time now thinking about people and what they had to do with each other. Everybody was one, he saw, and everybody had the same life pain. Not everyone saw it, most people felt alone with it, but if they saw the oneness they wouldn't feel alone with it and the pain would be less. That was what Stuart was always talking about. Oneness had more to do with religion than being saved, than individuals being saved. The only way was to save everybody in one bringing-together. He knew that pain was from aloneness and if people could realize the oneness completely there wouldn't be any pain at all. There would only be consciousness and love. That was his religion. It was for him what Christianity was now for Michael. For Stuart, Christ was the center where the oneness came from. Everybody was one in Christ. But anyone could be the center. Everybody was one, separations between things were mere illusions, so anyone could be the Christ and spread the Gospel of oneness. That was what he was doing. He tried to bring people to recognize their own selves and suffering in him and ease their pain.

Stuart himself suffered terribly. He was not yet perfect in his faith, in realizing the Godhead, but he was aware of his life pain, which was why it was so much worse for him. His misery in fearing that he was a homosexual was no different from anybody else's because everybody's was the same but his awareness was so keen that it weighed more heavily. He was not unequivocally homosexual but he'd felt stirrings and he knew how close he was. Once he'd been hitchhiking and a man picked him up and they started having a conversation. They talked on and on about women and how they acted and Stuart was interested in the conversation when the man stopped the car. They kept on talking and finally the man started touching Stuart's shoulders and hair

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and Stuart became very excited. He really wished the man could keep doing it but he was so afraid of being a homosexual he couldn't stay so he got out of the car; but he never forgot how he felt, he knew he had those feelings for men. Sometimes he himself touched men in a friendly way but he knew he really liked it just because they were men. It looked like he was warm to everybody so he touched them, but he knew he wanted men to touch him as well. There was nothing wrong with it because of the oneness, because distinctions between bodies didn't mean anything but still he was afraid of it. He feared if he let himself do what he really wanted he would end up where only homosexuals lived and that horrified him. Intellectually it was fine, but when he thought of his father telling his mother that he was a homosexual living with them in some colony he became sick.

The other thing he feared—which was probably the same thing—was his fear of women. He lived with Joan but it had become worse and harder for him to touch her until he really couldn't bear it at all. Of course he told her all of this, about being a homosexual, because he wanted to reveal everything. He wanted to get rid of all secrets so he told her everything and she said she understood but she did not really understand. He would be touching her one moment warmly and the next moment a giant wave of coldness welled up in him.

—I can't do this now, I'm sorry, he told her.

—It's all right, honey, she said, and left him alone.

They'd talked about it so she knew that when Stuart felt that way she had to leave him alone. She said she saw the problem and wanted to help him but she didn't completely understand. She came back a while later and put her arm on him.

—What do you want me to do, honey? she asked.

—I don't know, was his answer. That's the trouble. I don't know what I want you to do.

Joan tried to know what to do but Stuart always felt she was pushing him, that she was demanding something from him, demanding him to perform. If he could do what she wanted it was okay but if not he felt cold and inadequate and at her mercy. He couldn't stand touching her and yet he needed her there. If she left him for good his thoughts would turn even more inward and a deep depression would overwhelm him.

One evening Stuart lay on the bed while Joan washed up in the kitchen. He heard her setting the washed plates on one another and running water in the sink. He lay with his arm over his eyes thinking how bad things had gotten between Joan and him. She was so motherly working in the kitchen, but he was plagued thinking how difficult it was to touch her. He dreaded her coming into the bedroom and lying beside him. He felt cold and sick. He was afraid, knowing he was homosexual. He was only partly homosexual and he supposed everybody was—at least everybody said that was so. But knowing he was so close, so nearly completely homosexual made him worry horribly about how it would turn out. He knew that sooner or later he would have to tell Joan he couldn't touch her at all anymore, ever. Then he would leave and be alone. His thoughts would trap him and make him crazy. Always being alone and talking to no one he would think about the same things, about everything falling apart with Joan and being cold with women and liking to touch men and he would lose control of his thoughts and fall into a pit of depression. Suicide crossed such people's minds and it would cross his mind too. He felt his insides relaxing when he thought about suicide. That was the worst it could get, he thought. He could always do that. But if he were afraid to do it, perhaps he would end up living in a colony of homosexuals trying to ignore his misery. He heard Joan closing cupboard doors in the kitchen. Women were domestic and fertile and never worried about a thing. They were just passive and never really did anything. She came into the bedroom. He lay with his arm over his eyes.

—Are you ready for bed, honey? Then he heard her slipping off clothes, stepping around and hanging things in the closet.

He rose. The light was harsh and the room was foreign. She was foreign to him but she acted as natural as ever. He felt cold and sick. His head was sweating. He went into the livingroom to think things over, but he'd thought them over many times already. Sooner or later he had to tell Joan he couldn't touch her and couldn't live with her anymore. It was just a question of when and how he could bring himself to do it. She was getting into bed. It was pointless to linger in the livingroom, but he couldn't think yet so he waited. He had to think of what to say. He felt himself loosen, knowing it was going to happen and there was nothing he could do about it so he might as well just say it. He was going to tell Joan it was hopeless because he couldn't bear to touch her anymore. At least he knew what he had to say, at least it was definite. He went into the bedroom, dropped his clothes on the chair and got into bed beside her and lay with his arm over his eyes. They lay quietly, she saying nothing and he unable to say anything. She didn't slide next to him or put her arm over his chest; maybe she was tired. Maybe they would just go to sleep that night and not have to talk about anything. She didn't move or speak. Perhaps he'd gotten carried away worrying and everything would get better somehow. She moved onto her side close to him and laid her arm on his chest. Her arm was heavy and foreign. Coldness and disgust welled up in him. His face was cold and sweaty. He knew that that night was the end once and for all.

—Do you feel all right, honey?

He couldn't speak. He was disgusted. Her kindness was really lust disguised. She was kind because she wanted him to be warm and that was the only reason. She was demanding him but he couldn't force himself again. He didn't want to. She would never understand. She said she understood and always asked what she should do but it was just lust in her. He laughed a whimpering laugh.

—Do you want me to leave? she asked him.

He'd known she would say something like that sooner or later. She was a young woman with great lust and it was torture being with such a man as him. She wanted to leave and find someone to satisfy her but it was hard for her to say it. Now everything had been said. She was waiting for his answer. Her voice was gentle inviting him to say yes. She

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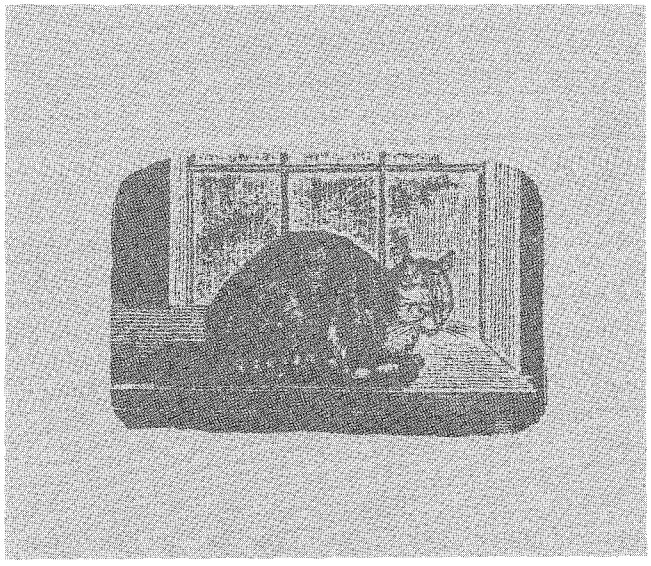
could sound warm and understanding anytime, she was strong so he had no fear of hurting her by saying yes. It was the perfect time to say yes, this is only torturing both of us and I have to be alone to think everything over, but he couldn't say it. He could have even screamed yes yes yes go leave now and leave me alone and she would have kissed him goodbye and left without any hard feelings, but he was afraid. He couldn't tell her to leave because he was afraid to be alone. He was afraid of where his thoughts would carry him if he had every day just to sit and think what a mess he was and how bad the suffering was. He would go insane thinking about his homosexuality getting control and about ending up in some colony. She moved back away from him and he lay with his arm over his eyes. He couldn't say anything. He wished she would just do something without his saying anything but she was a woman and women never did that. She would keep being kind on the surface and burning with lust secretly but she would never just tell him to leave. He wished he were numb or at the bottom of a deep lake.

—I'll go, Stuart, she said. Don't feel bad. I'll go for awhile and if you want I'll come back later.

So she left the next day.

Stuart thought the bottomless pit would swallow him at once but it didn't. He feared it and was prepared for it when Joan left but then it disappeared. It didn't drive him crazy being alone, it was even boring. He went to bed early and got up late. Three afternoons a week he swept the rooms and hallways in the school. Seeing the children's pictures pinned up made him sad. They were angels. He was a fallen angel.



He'd learned too much. In the morning in the kitchen he heard the children's screaming coming up from the playground, so full of life, such a contrast to his wretchedness. Everyone except children were wretched deep down inside but Stuart recognized it more sharply and suffered more keenly. He wrote letters to Michael and other people to tell them all about it. They were good letters and very long letters which explained why Joan had left and why he was so low and lonely. He admitted everything there was to admit so that everyone would see how real it was, his suffering, and they they could come to him freely. They would be able to tell him everything in the same detail; they would write about their own pain in return. He wasn't afraid to make it sound as bad as it was because he had to convince everyone that he couldn't hurt them. He was on the bottom. His letters were good. He wrote long complicated sentences and brought in things like the cats and the sun which were a perfect contrast to his feelings. He poured the letters out. He poured himself out. He'd written before to Michael but those letters had been nothing compared to these. Perhaps these were shocking. He didn't care. Michael had to know how weak and pitiful and harmless he was and then they could come together. Stuart saw Michael was a little taken in by that Bible thing but that was no barrier. Stuart would speak on any terms. He'd proved he was willing to speak on any terms by writing back and forth with Michael about the Bible. His parents had been real churchgoers so he knew all about that sort of thing, he knew how to answer Michael's questions, very straight questions trying to pin him down like did he believe Christ had really been here in the flesh, but what Michael didn't see was that it didn't matter; all that mattered was the oneness. Anybody, Stuart himself, could be the Christ and teach people the oneness. Didn't the Bible itself say that Christ was in all of us? Michael kept bringing up black and white arguments, he kept talking about the rules, about praying. Pray incessantly, Michael had quoted. He was wound up in baptism and praying in tongues and doctrine. Michael kept bringing up the devil; everything unconfirmed by the Bible was from the devil, he kept saying. He hung onto words like 'only', the only way to God was through Christ, through the Bible. He made religion into a war. Religion wasn't a war. God didn't want a war. God was oneness. Michael missed the point. Practically everyone missed the point. But Stuart knew; he knew that God was oneness which was all anybody had to see. People talked about the resurrection and the covenants but none of that was any use if you didn't see that Christ was in all of us, if you weren't a Christ of your own. Stuart was a Christ. His purpose was to make everyone see him, see his suffering, see everyone's oneness in suffering. That was where the letters came in. That was where love-making came in. Letters were a way of telling people about God, telling them you were the same, and love-making was the most humble, the most admitting way of showing it. That was why it didn't matter if you touched men or touched women. It was just a way of showing, of admitting you were the same within God as any other man or woman. Stuart's mission was to show everyone how needless it was to suffer alone because everybody was one in God, because the same God contained everybody which made everyone's suffering everyone else's, and that was what he was talking about in his letters; that was really the whole point in a very long letter to Michael.

Something horrible is going to happen, I can feel it pulling me as if it must happen. Something is distilling more and more and when the substance of me is pure I'm afraid it will be terrible and incoherent and deep at the bottom of a pit. I know what the answer is. I know you know what it is too but you see I can't do it alone. The answer

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is to spread myself out through other people to God until my self is lost in love and God but I need somebody to do that. With these walls and these fears of Joan and fears of myself there's nothing to do. But you can help me, Michael. You can help me because you know about God. If you just know me and acknowledge me, can you see what a rest it will be from wondering if I really am alive here and tearing myself apart turning inside trying to make some sense out of something which has no sense by itself, without other people. Don't you see, you are the rest of me. Please know me. I love you, Michael. I want to know everything about you, every thought and dream, everything that makes you tick. I need you to get to God. Christ is here writing this letter and there reading it. Let me come into you please. Tell me everything so I can come in. Nothing you say can change my feelings about you. Just let me see you. It's dark, Michael, let me see you so I won't be so lost.

For a long time Michael had not understood Stuart at all. He'd always doubted practically everything Stuart said. First of all he hated messes and Stuart always seemed to be in them. He seemed to want them. He looked like he wanted to break out and cry in front of everybody but couldn't. He couldn't make the act. Stuart always talked about suffering but Michael didn't believe he suffered half that much. Stuart always sat hunched over on a chair with one leg hanging over the other and his arms crossed on his knee and spoke in fatherly tones. Stuart was the one to console people when he wasn't in pieces himself. He consoled people by talking about the oneness and illusions. He said that it was futile to draw lines around everything and call this good and that evil. He said if everyone just shared the pain and accepted his brother's suffering there wouldn't be any suffering at all but just a bond, a realization of the unity which would be joy. But Stuart was the most miserable one of all. He spoke in fatherly tones between his own messes. Michael hated messes. He hated emotion when it wasn't joyful. Unjoyful emotion seemed so unnecessary and he himself never appeared low. Sometimes he felt low but it seemed hypocritical to show it when he could just ignore it. If he felt a little bad he didn't want to put on an act just to let people know it. If he felt good he let people see it because then they might feel better but he couldn't stand bothering everybody with his little upsets. That was all Stuart was doing. Stuart wanted everyone to think he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, he seemed almost to wish he would have one. Michael on the other hand never seemed to be suffering and no one knew if he was down or not. Some people thought he was cold and unemotional and other people thought he hid everything inside, but the fact was he never felt low to the point of showing it. It would have been false to make people think it was so bad he needed to show it when it wasn't. If he did feel bad it was never very bad and never for very long. He never worried because he knew that nothing seriously bad would ever happen.

The Bible said it. The Bible said that everything turned to good for anyone who believed. Many people thought it conceited and cold to say he never worried but it was true. The Bible said never worry about tomorrow because there is enough evil today. The Bible was the truest book ever written, the purest thing in the world. Reading it made him feel clean and he memorized long passages to repeat when he was tempted to be afraid. He knew that if he obeyed the Bible word for word and believed in Jesus Christ then nothing could go wrong. Every situation he could think of, every question, was in the Bible so he could be sure what the right thing was. He and Stuart wrote lots of letters back and forth about it. Stuart had known about the Bible a long time and said he was happy that Michael had found it. Michael felt more that Jesus had found him rather than he the Bible but it was a small point of difference. Stuart did seem to know what the Bible said, but when he started writing about all his problems he didn't say anything more about the Bible. Every letter was long and complicated and about Joan. Religion didn't matter to Stuart when it came to a problem. He said he had it all in his grasp but he never used it for anything. Michael used religion against anything bad. Michael tried to make Stuart see that their faiths were different by asking lots of questions. Stuart's faith was just a worldly understanding, of no use whatsoever. Michael asked Stuart questions like did he believe in the resurrection, in the actual fact of Christ's rising from the dead, but Stuart never answered directly. Once Stuart had agreed that the Bible was literarily true but later he said it was true as the history of the religion; he began saying things about all the great religions of the world, he called them. He talked about Christ as another version of Buddha. It was all rhetoric and Michael really could not stand rhetoric. Stuart would never admit their difference in faith. He made his answers out of long complicated sentences with something always on the end, some phrase which took away the meaning. There were holes in his sentences. They were empty.

Nevertheless Michael was wrong. His feelings changed completely when Stuart wrote that nothing could change his feelings because he just wanted, he needed to know everything that made Michael tick. Then Michael saw that Stuart was the kind of friend who would always be your friend and nothing could offend him or change his mind. Stuart had written again and again about his problems, his suffering, about religion, but Michael had always doubted his motives and sincerity. He doubted that Stuart was really suffering as badly as he said. He'd thought Stuart was condescending to get attention but he'd been wrong. Stuart did need him. Stuart knew his faith was incomplete so he needed people to put his love on, he needed something to absorb with his love. He had written everything, he had told even the most private things, whereas Michael hadn't told him anything. Michael had never written wholly honestly in order to spare himself. He had something very personal of his own to say about Stuart's problems but he'd hidden it, he was embarrassed about it. Michael knew that was wrong and didn't want to hold back anymore. It was difficult but he wanted to say everything he felt about God and Christ, even if Stuart thought he was crazy or simple or whatever. It was only his job to tell it and God would work the solution, God could make Stuart believe it. He wanted to write Stuart at once and reveal everything he believed. Now he was like Stuart. He wanted to make Stuart know who he was.

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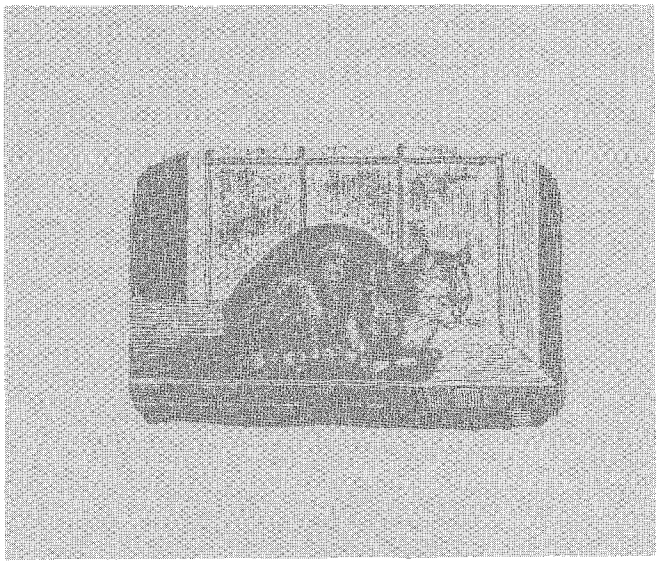
In Saratoga Springs before Michael and Stuart ever met, Michael had worked in the library where he met a woman named Mrs. Gayle. She came in once a week and got several books, usually histories and biographies. He helped her find books and sometimes ordered books for her and she thanked him always and said he was very nice. She was never in a hurry and she talked to Michael at the desk where he worked. She had short dark brown hair always clean looking; she wore big warm looking sweaters. Michael had the feeling her husband was dead or something because she read such a lot and didn't act married. She had a son Richard who came with her. She treated him like a baby, rubbing his head and fussing over his clothes even though he was about ten years old. He was patient with her. She looked at him proudly and fussed over him but there was never any mention of Mr. Gayle so Michael thought perhaps he'd died. She was intelligent looking; she wore dark-rimmed glasses which, when she wasn't wearing them, hung on her sweatered breast. She and Richard spent a long time in the stacks before coming back to the desk with three or four books in a pile from largest to smallest. She filled out Richard's slip for him and packed all the books in her bag. Often they lingered at the desk awhile and she asked Michael about himself. She didn't ask just one question and drop it, she asked and asked until he said something definite about this or that, then she said what she thought and smiled and left. Michael felt good afterwards. He looked forward to their coming and expected them in the afternoon when Richard was finished with school.



One day Michael met her on the street near her home and she invited him in. Her apartment was on the second floor of a spacious old house and had many pictures and plants. Michael sat in a very big chair while she made coffee. The room was yellow and light green like her lemony perfume. Her glasses lay on the writing desk; the window was full of green foliage clinging to strings and makeshift trellises. Paintings of farm scenes and dark households hung on the walls in conservative black frames. He heard her stepping around in the kitchen closing doors, running water, and putting cups on the saucers. It was just like he knew it would be, clean and smooth running. She was like a hen tending her nest incessantly. She spoke very softly at home as if she were afraid of waking a baby. She didn't have a baby except for Richard who was always awake anyway but perhaps she pretended she still did. They talked for a couple hours in her livingroom that day and she invited him other times. She talked about things she had done and what she was reading. She liked biographies of musicians. She asked many questions, often very direct questions and she looked at his face seriously. He knew she was a serious person and he didn't mind telling her about himself. He told her he didn't know what he was going to do and said that that worried him sometimes. She looked right into his eyes while he was talking and he looked back into hers. Her face was kind and intelligent, it was beautiful. He looked back into her eyes for long moments and she looked at him. He loved her, actually. It was stupid; she was at least ten years older but he loved her anyway. He knew she thought of him like a son; she was a mother and loved taking care of things so he knew he was sort of a son to her but he loved her.

He came again and again and they talked for hours. He felt almost like part of the family. She made coffee or tea and if he stayed for dinner he went into the kitchen to talk and watch her work. It was an old kitchen, white, with spacious counters and cupboards. He watched her hands washing each piece of vegetable under the tap before peeling it. He studied her face and her body. He looked into her eyes and she looked back but she looked back with a question. She didn't think of him in the same way, he knew. He loved her but she thought of him more as a son. She wondered why he looked at her for such long moments, she wanted to know what he was thinking about. Maybe she wanted to discourage him from thinking as he did but she didn't need to do that. He liked just coming over to talk and he'd never try anything with her. Yet he couldn't help staring because he loved her, and she noticed.

—Why do you look at me that way? she said.

He had just been looking at her whole body and then he'd looked longingly into her eyes. He really wanted just to put his arms around her just once but he could never do it. He loved her more and more and his thoughts became fiercer but he could never speak them.

—What way is that? he answered. But she knew what it was and she never pressed him to say it.

After dinner they sat talking for hours in the livingroom. She told him about places she'd been and about friends, but she never spoke about her husband. She talked for long about her childhood. She had never really known her mother; her mother had never had time for her. She retold things that happened to her as a little girl while Michael listened closely, watching her face. He was learning more and more about her all the time. If he sat patiently she spoke on and on and eventually she would tell him everything. He talked about himself too when she asked him questions but she had a great deal to say, she seemed to want to tell a great deal so he mostly listened. One night they talked very late until Richard had gone to bed. They

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talked very softly in the livingroom because Richard was sleeping. She started to tell him very personal things. After her divorce she was shocked and upset so she'd visited a psychiatrist. Her husband had been seeing another woman and suddenly wanted a divorce. She'd had no idea whatsoever and the shock was so great she thought she would lose her mind and began having bad headaches. She visited a psychiatrist once a week for a couple of months and then more often and she fell in love with him. Michael could scarcely believe his ears but he listened quietly. She fell in love with the psychiatrist and when her headaches were gone she quit visiting him. She sent him a letter; she wrote that she loved him and wanted to meet with him. She thought nothing would happen but he called and they met one weekend in another town. She spoke very softly and slowly and Michael knew she was saying very secret things. He watched her face and looked into her eyes and loved her even more as she told the story. She met the psychiatrist on the weekend and they went to a hotel. She stopped as if the story were over but it wasn't. She stared into space and finished. The psychiatrist had been impotent.

Michael loved her all the more for telling him that. Everybody had deep secrets like that; he didn't think any worse of her. On the contrary he loved her even more. This was a glimpse of her inner self, her dark mysterious core, and he wanted to know more and more. He wished she could tell him more secrets. She was so deep. He knew why the doctor had wanted her, she was so hidden and complex below her spotless skin. He wanted to explore further and always listened very patiently while she did most of the talking. Often she mentioned someone named Andy. She had known him since she was a little girl. They had gone to school together and later travelled together. At one time they'd been engaged to marry but it had broken off. Andy later joined a seminary. She resented that. She'd loved Andy, but she lost him to the seminary and to his parents. She told about their travelling through the South which was probably why his parents had disliked her. She told about their plans and their love but it had come to nothing. His parents and the seminary got in the way. Nonsense, she called it. She said he became very pious-acting and then there was nothing left between them.

Michael could see that talking about it made her sad and resentful. She resented Andy's piety. At this time Michael hadn't truly become a Christian but he understood what Andy had done, he could understand Andy's wanting a pure life in the church. He knew the appeal of a spiritual life. But she couldn't see why Andy had done it. To her it was nonsense and an escape from standing up to his parents.

—Do you believe in spiritual things, in supernatural things? he asked her. Michael believed in God and he knew why people gave their lives to the church.

—Those things are a kind of illness, she said.

She was sad from talking about Andy and everything that had happened. She lay on the couch on the other side of the room and said nothing. She was very quiet thinking about Andy, how he hadn't married her, and how her eventual marriage had gone bad. Neither of them said anything and Michael didn't want to ask her any more questions. He felt to blame in a way for her feeling bad because he'd encouraged her to go on about Andy, he'd asked her about him and now she looked very sad. He'd done it only because he wanted to know her. He loved her. He wanted to know her deep secrets because he loved her; that was the only reason. But now she felt sad about it and it was partly his fault. It troubled him a little that she didn't believe in spiritual things; he'd thought surely she believed in those things but it didn't make a big difference that she didn't. There was still a great deal about her he didn't know and needed to know. She told him to come and sit next to her on the couch and he did.

—Why do you look at me the way you do, she asked him.

She was holding his hand and he loved her. He wanted to tell her now. She had told him a lot and she was sad so he had to tell her.

—I look at you that way because you are beautiful, he said. You are beautiful and I guess I look at you because I want you that way. But I don't want anything bad to happen so that we're not friends anymore. I'm not going to wreck our friendship.

—I love you too, Michael, she said. But I don't want anything to happen either. I don't want to get involved in that way either.

He leaned down putting his head next to hers and felt her arm on his back. He was in her arms where he'd always wanted to be. He'd never been so close to her face. He could smell her faint sweet smell. She was so deep and dark. He could feel himself falling into her and discovering her. She was a woman and so much older, she had a child, she was unquestionably woman. Now he could feel the substance of her body and the weight of her arms. It was a new feeling, to know that her arms were thick and to feel them against his body. It was foreign to him. He didn't know her completely but he was falling into her and now he would discover her.

—Let's go in here, she said, rising, and she led him into the bedroom. He'd never been in the bedroom and it was strange and foreign. She acted differently in there. She owned him in there where everything was new and foreign to him. It was dark and he didn't know where he was. They lay on the bed and he took off her clothes. He did it automatically without thinking. He undressed himself and lay against her but it was new and he was nervous. She acted differently all of a sudden; she treated him a little roughly. And yet he scarcely knew her. He felt himself falling helplessly into her and discovering the depth, but so far he didn't know who she was at all. He was tight all over and thought his body would burst with lust for her. He thought he would explode with nervous lust and then what could he do? Her body wanted his but if he couldn't control himself, if he burst too soon, what could he do? He tried to calm himself but she was touching him and it was no use. He was going to lose himself and then he would be no use to her, she wouldn't understand. He would be like the psychiatrist then. His nervous lust exploded in one second but she didn't notice. Instantly his nervous lust was gone but she still demanded him. He was cold and useless to her. Inside he recoiled from her but she held him against her and a cold wave spread through his body, cold and disgust. He'd never seen

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her face so close, from inches away; it was old and delirious. She was moving cravingly but he was rigid and cold. He wanted to leave. His only hope was to keep her from knowing and maybe he would warm up to her again and she wouldn't know. He stayed close to her but her persistence repelled him more. If she lay quietly for awhile he might have a chance to warm to her again but she wouldn't move away. She slowed down but she hung on him like a sore, like a mollusk feeding on his blood. The door opened.

—Don't come in, honey, she said. Richard was standing behind the cracked door. She pointed to the closet door for Michael to stand behind while Richard was there. Richard came in and she talked to him with the sheets pulled up against her. Richard couldn't sleep and wanted something to eat. Michael stood naked hiding behind the door while they talked. He was hiding because it was shameful for him to be there. Now he saw how shameful it was. He knew why he'd been so nervous and then so disgusted. It was ugly and wrong. Richard stayed for a minute before she sent him back to his room. She told him she couldn't make him anything to eat. Michael came from behind the door and picked up his clothes.

—I'd better leave, he told her. She knew something was wrong. She watched him start dressing, she moved near him and touched him. He felt her fingernails on his side.

—Don't leave, Michael, she said.

But he left. After that they didn't talk very much and she never asked him to come over again.

Michael wanted to write Stuart and say everything, how he'd failed with her and how he'd run away. Stuart had told Michael personal things but Michael had never told anything in return. But now he wanted to. He'd told Stuart some parts of what happened with Mrs. Gayle but never all of it, never the extent of his failure. He was too ashamed to tell that. Instead he appeared clean and unblemished. He knew what his blemish was. He was vain. He was embarrassed about failing, he was embarrassed about the things he believed, about God. God had protected him that night with Mrs. Gayle, God had made it impossible for him to sin with her, but Michael couldn't tell anybody what he believed. It sounded silly. His vanity ate inside him like a sore. That night with her he had felt dirty hiding behind the door. He knew on the other hand how clean it was to love God and pray but he was too vain to say that. It sounded so simple-minded. Hiding his faith was a sin too and he let it fester inside. Now he wanted to get rid of the sore. Stuart had shown him how he could do it. Stuart had told him everything but Michael had doubted him. He'd thought that Stuart just wanted to get attention. Michael had doubted Stuart's faith but at least Stuart could talk about what he believed. Michael was afraid that people would think he was weak so he kept God hidden inside with the dirt and sin. He'd thought his faith was pure and true but he smothered it inside. Now he wanted to show what a help God had been to him. He didn't worry about his impotency because his lust had been wrong in the first place. She was married, she was foreign to him. It was the same with Stuart and Joan. They weren't married, they weren't really one so their love-making was wrong. That was the truth, that was the heart of what Michael believed and he wanted to get it out and be clean inside. His vanity in not saying it was killing his faith like cancer. He would kill the vanity. Maybe Stuart would think he was crazy for believing such a thing but that didn't matter. God was the important thing. It didn't matter if Stuart hated him for believing it; the main thing was to say it. He began writing the letter feeling how dirty it was with everything hidden inside and thinking how clean it would be to have everything in the clear. At first he had to force himself to write but it came easier and easier. He wanted to please God. He thanked God for giving him this opportunity to confess. Stuart had asked him to confess so he wrote exactly what he believed and didn't try to smooth it over. He wrote just how it had happened with Mrs. Gayle, how his lust exploded and how he was useless to her. He said how cold and disgusted he felt hiding behind the door while Richard was in the room. He knew the same flashes of cold and sweat that Stuart knew. He wrote how puny he felt leaving her on the bed that way, running away. He told Stuart because Stuart needed to see that the fear of impotency was unnecessary, that it was God saving him from sin. Surely that would help Stuart. God would see that Stuart saw the truth in it and took it in.

Don't ask me how I can be embarrassed to talk about something I believe. My faith isn't perfect. I guess I've always been afraid of seeming ridiculous, but now I'm not going to think about that anymore. You wanted me to tell you everything so I'm trying to do it. I've kept it inside like something shameful but you've convinced me to come out with it. I'm trying to tell you without smoothing it out, which isn't easy because it sounds so extreme. The Bible says that God joins men and women together and then he can accept their love-making. He makes them one in the Spirit when they get married, when they accept one another forever, and then they can be one in the flesh. One in the Spirit means one in the flesh. You can't be one in the flesh completely without being spiritually bound; it's futile to try. I know it's not a very modern idea, but I believe it. It's a sin to go after the flesh without God's approval. Now I've eliminated the possibility of making love until I am married, until I've accepted someone forever, and then God will let me make love and have children. Why don't you do that Stuart? Isn't it the perfect solution? If you eliminated the possibility for physical love with men and women then there would be nothing to worry about. You wouldn't have to worry about being a homosexual and you wouldn't have to worry about being impotent. If you do what God tells us to do than there is nothing to worry about. You yourself said that God wrote the Bible so it has to be true, doesn't it? Would God give us something that wasn't true or wouldn't help us?

Stuart finished reading Michael's letter and sat thinking how frigid Michael was, how Michael couldn't feel anything at all. Often Stuart wrote back after finishing reading the letter and sometimes he wrote back twice the same day but this time he didn't, this time he didn't write back at all. □

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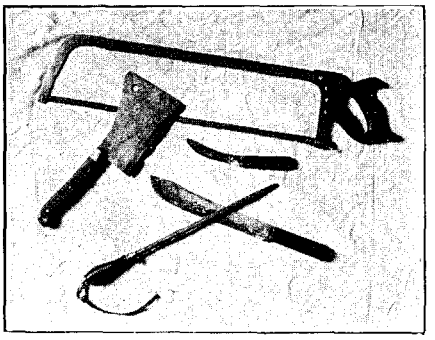
THIS WHEEL

Joseph Langland



I grew up on a general farm in the very northeast corner of Iowa, in Highland Township in Winneshiek County, in hilly country a mile south of the Minnesota line and about twenty miles west of the Mississippi River and Wisconsin. It is a land of high hills, extensive woodlands, rolling fields, and of rather pronounced valleys with springs and creeks. The county itself holds remarkable clusters of Norwegian, German, Irish, and Czechoslovakian farmers, craftsmen, and small-town business men—generally second, third, and now fourth generation immigrants. The county seat, Decorah, has a strong Norwegian-American cast and a prominent liberal arts college deriving from that same background.

From the time I was four years old, when my family moved seven miles south from Spring Grove, Minnesota, to the Iowa farm which had been purchased and practically homesteaded by my grandfather, Mons Hanson Langeland, to the age of eighteen when I went off to college in California, I grew up on this "home farm", which in two more years will have been in the family for one hundred years. In 1921, which was when my father moved back to the farm, this time with his family, almost all of the neighbors were of Norwegian background and spoke that language in their homes. All of my own grandparents were born in Norway and came to this area as young men and women in the 1850s and 1860s.

That was the ground where I had the initiating experiences from which these "sacrifice" poems came. In one sense I did not even know what those experiences were, or, rather, I had forgotten them. The so-called "events" in these poems must have happened roughly between 1923 and 1936. The first poems in this sequence were written from 1958-1963, from twenty-two to forty years later. Naturally, I hope that the sense of these things are here now in their own bright clusters of sharp detail and pleasure and pain, the ambience of long recall shining in them like a prism of emotional truth.

All of these poems are about the process of "growing up", say roughly from age six to young manhood. They are all "true", if by that word we can gather a whole cluster of various experiences into only one event, place them in a single small narrative sequence, and then say, yes, this is what happened. If the name of a person or an animal is altered, or the manner of a death changed, nothing was changed which might have *seemed* false, then or now. A full half century after some of these "events", the poems keep for me the freshness of truth—even though in this past year of 1975 alone some local researchers have reminded me of inaccurate details.

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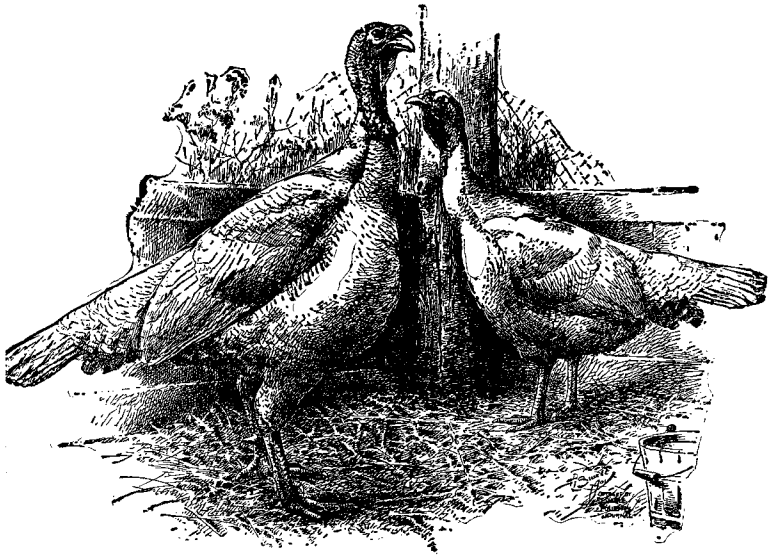
But it is emotional truth I wanted, and want—the truth of the poem even in the distortion of facts. Basically, this must rise upon actual truth as a reporter or a recorder might know it; then it must ride toward emotional truth by whatever means it can, even if this means altering and regrouping a series of facts. I am forever encountering discrepancies; thus far—and these poems have been abroad for over a decade now—none of these have impelled me toward a single revision. Someone told me that rainbow trout have no scales, or at best very tiny scales; well, the rainbow suckers did. And were there *three* hawks? More likely one or two. But three is a good number; it is a trinity; it is part of the metaphysical numerology of my youth; it encompasses love and fear, life and death. Did I see the golden owl descend, or was that only my imagination when I saw him



in a trap? Was it a hand or a finger in the cornshredder? Or a pistol rather than a rifle? Were there *three* tiny rattlesnakes? And were they *rattle*snakes? They were known to inhabit some of the bluffs overlooking the valleys. Or *thirty-three* years to get that cord untied? Or are we really talking about a moment of spiritual regeneration? Was the bounty always 10¢ or 15¢? Was a wolf's body hanging on the fence? And wasn't it *two* geese instead of three? Was Eric his name, or was that more like the echo of voices in the woodlands saying the name? Was *112* the right number?

Yes and no, yes and no, yes and no.

You grant me my conditions, and the answers are all yes. You come at me with a hard skepticism, and I will need an occasional no in my defense. For the record. But not in defense of the poem, which is its own world, obliged to the general truth of the conditions it is able to create for a *responsive* reader. Not to *any* reader; a *responsive* one. I would not want to be put down by those who have not done their homework. Who should presume to judge all things regardless of his preparation? Are you taken in? Then I speak truth. Are you not taken in? Then the words lie false as falsehood upon the page, even though all the facts be verifiable by responsible witnesses, as in a court of law. The truth of most poems is tried, in large part, by their success with a good reader.

But even in a court of law there would be a majority of truth in most of these poems.

The particular experiences that each one has in the process of growing up will likely be as varied as ancestry, place, inclination, accident, and coincidence allow; still, the subject, "growing up", will be the same for all, even though the circumstances are radically different. Most of the time, in our early years, we do not even know in any self-conscious way just what is happening. Later, it is the high points of what we remember that stand out in our recollections and define us for ourselves. They become the catalysts for a host of particular events and feelings and resonate to our sense of ourselves. Personality and character rally to these points like signposts on the way. And long memory is often like a deep dream: partially remembered, partially understood.

From time to time, we are carried back to a portion of our true selves by a chance remark, or meeting, or circumstance, or even sheer happenstance. Let me tell how I was reawakened to the subject matter of these poems. I can give the surface. Of course, it is only when there is rich ore underneath that the exposition of the surface matters much at all.

During the year 1955-56, when I was teaching at the University of Wyoming, I received the Amy Lowell Traveling Poetry Fellowship. This required that the recipient spend one year "off the continent of North America", and that he "practice the art of poetry as known to him". Amy knew how to make requirements for writers! So my wife and I, with one of our children, chose to live for most of that time in Southern Italy, in Positano.

For reading, with economy, we ordered twenty-five Penguin paperbacks sent to us from London at a cost of about eighteen dollars. One of these was *The Literature of the United States*, written by Marcus Cunliffe. Somewhere in that book Mr. Cunliffe says that New York City is the intellectual capital of the United States. He was from England, his wife an artist from New York City, and I think that he assumed that our country, like London for England, or Paris for France, had an intellectual center. The idea offended my own sense of rightness, since I have always believed—as I think most Americans believe—that we have no single intellectual capital in our country. New York City is obviously the chief market center. I sent Mr. Cunliffe a long letter pointing out, by the evidence of his own book, that if there had been any centers of literature in our country they might have been in New England in the 19th century, in Chicago and the Midwest in the early 20th century, and in the South later on in the first half of this century. We exchanged several letters.

As a result, in the summer of 1957 or 1958, Mr. Cunliffe came to the University of Wyoming. In one of his lectures there he said that "Americans are overly given to haruspicating and scrying", or words very close to this. I knew that scrying was somewhat akin to crystal-gazing and predicting, but I had to look up "haruspicating". I found that an haruspex was one who, literally, looks at the guts. Or in other terms, he was a pagan Roman or Etruscan priest who examined the entrails of sacrificial animals to predict natural phenomena and the future; he also foretold events by interpreting natural phenomena.

I cannot convey the excitement that this word, once I knew what it meant, aroused in me. The "sacrifice" poems, beginning almost immediately after this discovery and continuing for

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five to six years, are the result. No sooner had I read the definition than I exclaimed to myself, "Why, I have been an haruspicator for a long time!" And I decided, at once, to resume the role again in my poems.

I had lived closely with hundreds of cattle, hundreds of sheep and pigs, thousands of chickens, perhaps twenty to thirty horses, plus goats, turkeys, guinea hens, cats, geese, dogs, not to mention tens of thousands of birds and the wildlife of our woods and valleys, which included fox, squirrels, rabbits, coon, groundhogs, gophers, snakes, and a generous variety of trees, bushes, flowers, fish, and, finally, the largely rural community of first and second generation Norwegian-American immigrants.

In the whole general process of farming and making a living I had seen innumerable animals raised and slaughtered for market, and many of them trapped and killed in violent ways in the whole ongoing cyclic phenomenon of their lives and of my own youth. I had seen the entrails of all these animals, and even fragments of people, in many striking and stunning circumstances. All this experience had confirmed in me, long before I thought it out, a very positive belief in the cyclic nature of life and death, affirmative in its outlook.

I have never thought of these poems as being morbid, though almost all of them deal with parts and forms of death. I feel, rather, a strong acceptance of the cyclic process, combined surely with all its anguish and joy and pain: an affirmation of a life process inherent in it all. Nothing came to an end; nothing stopped; no species became extinct; no one gave up. Dismay and grief, yes; cynicism and despair, no. The natural world taught us that. Winter after tough winter that world would rise again in the renewed birth of all things. That was the philosophy I unthinkingly took on as a child and youth, and still in its essence keep.

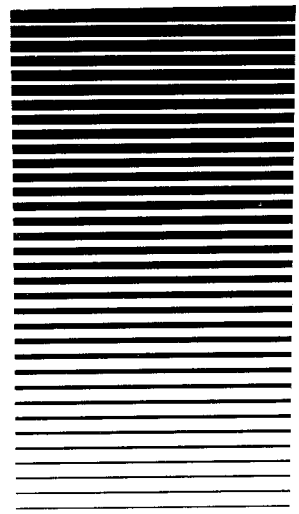
Every death I investigated in my memory—and there were thousands of them in the routine process of getting food from the farm to you, reader—not omitting the sheer incomprehensibility of some of them, including suicides and explosions and madness and fatalistic coincidences, all of these fed that larger philosophy and were consummated in it. I do not mean to say that others must come to the same conclusions; there are many others who have not—and a few reviewers were appalled at some of the "sacrifice" poems—but *I* did, and I know many others who grew up in similar circumstances and hold equally solid affirmations in the face of their own cyclic pleasures and vicissitudes. Something repairs itself, cleanses its wounds, renews its body, continues its forms, regenerates the earth.

That was my haruspication, both then and now. In my excitement at the idea I began writing poems about those deaths. I had seen bulls gored, chickens killed by hawks and weasels and fox, wild geese dead, kittens drowned, sheep driven to their deaths over limestone bluffs by packs of dogs, hundreds of animals castrated, ant hills consumed in brush fires, animals eating their own offspring, even a little rainbow trout caught, killed, and eaten. It was part of the whole process by which we fed you as well as ourselves.

Remembering this, at least a quarter of a century back, my mind also was filled with abstract meanings and implications behind these events. They existed in the background of the events as part of the working condition for my memory, an advantage in having that experience at a distance: the childhood experience in the adult mind. Still, I would put down the event itself, fill it with what I felt, trying to keep the dramatic moment with a minimum of thematic elaboration.

Consequently, I kept alternate thematic titles for each of these poems as a working condition in the actual writing, and I hoped that these might become implicit in the brief narrative of each. I once thought that each poem should have two titles, but I discovered that I could never get the whole intended theme or concept behind a poem into a few words, so I dropped the second title. But here, now, I can say what these were.

So "Sacrifice of a Rainbow Trout" was also "The Pleasure of Death in a State of Pure Innocence". I'll list the rest. The Pet



Lamb: The Loss of Early Innocence. The Golden Owl: The Plunder of Young Idealism. My Dog, Rex: The Evil Sickle among the Flowers. The Old Gentleman: The Decline of Heroic Voices. My Pet Chick: The Suffocations of Excessive Love. My Neighbors: The Attritions of Daily Living. Our Young Mare: The Unhousing of Beneficent God. The Gunnysack of Cats: The Necessary and Beneficial Perversions of Love. The Rattlesnake: Symbolic Justifications. The Old Sow: The Violence of Unreasoning Revenge. My Cousin: The Unresolved Absurdities of Fact. The Flock of Sheep: The Pitfalls of Group Action. Eric: A Catechism of Human Culpability. Hans: The Oddities of Our Human Affections. Sparrows of the Field: The Pleasing Rationales of a Greater Good. Gophers and Woodchucks: The Bounties of Natural Law. The Grey Wolf: The Cold War. Wild Geese: The Deceits of Natural Instincts. Red Squirrel: The Tyranny of Fixed Ideas. Hill of Ants: The Atomic Bomb and the Ultimate Holocaust. Aunt Marie: The Sensuous Warfares of the Past.

And in "The Wheel of Summer", the title poem of a larger volume in which the "sacrifice" poems were first published, I wanted to catch something of the growth of love and bold maturity in young men.

In all of these I wanted toughness and tenderness together. These alternate titles were partial attempts to name the thing itself: the figure in the carpet for the beast in the jungle.

Dear Reader, or rather, Dear *Good* Reader. Do not let these partial titles obscure my larger intentions. I wanted to say something about life and death and fear and anguish and hope

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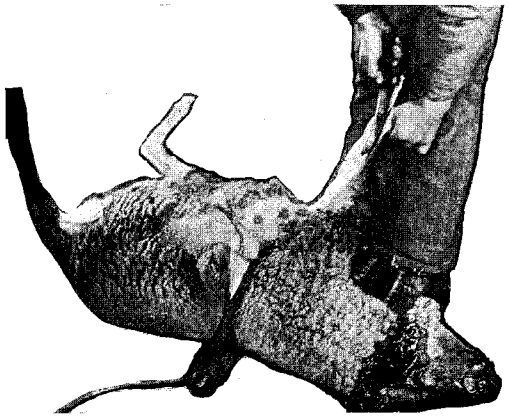
and violence and comfort and consolation and love—at least all of that. We know that we fall short, learning to accept our humanity. I wanted to talk in these poems, to you. I wanted to use formal and colloquial language together, the language of the barn *and* the house, of the street *and* the home. I wanted to yoke the ordinary speech and idiom of my youth to the rhetoric and elegance of poetry in English. I wanted to write American poems without denying my English or my Norwegian-American English. I wanted the old sense of folk tale and story and song to find a new habitation, as in an old home. I wanted these poems to talk *and* sing, at once, together. I wanted . . .

I meant to write a series of poems tracing the growth of emotional maturity in a young person from childhood to manhood; I meant to come to terms with my mind and my heart and



my glands. I used the familiar subject matter of my own youth, but I hope that my metaphors will equally embrace young men and women who rose up in cities and towns anywhere.

My subjects taught me that all things will come round again, never fear. Fear is a short view. And Death is just one part of it. The base of all of this is Life. And no matter how or what, it is quite miraculous. To the writer, as well as to the mature philosopher, the past is his *good* luck; it is the material with which he sees. We experience, think, and remember. It is the length of memory, or no memory at all, which defeats despair, because that memory tells us that we move in a system far greater than and as marvelous as ourselves, and no memory tells us little or nothing. Beware of short memories. The emotion of a poem is meant to lengthen and perpetuate the ephemera of our own lives.

All of us live in our own world, wherever we are. I lived in a remarkably whole one, haruspicating on Valley-View Farm. That real world was replete with metaphors; for me, those metaphors have become real. My best wish for these poems is that they might also seem to become just that, for you.

As they say in my home country, I hope I've done what I could for them. Maybe I've said too much. I only want to say what the poems can bear and not send them off in directions they were never headed toward in the first place. Anyway, here are the poems. As always, despite these words, they'll have to make it on their own.

THE SACRIFICE POEMS

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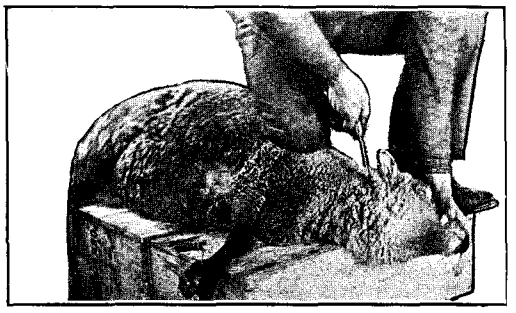
Sacrifice of My Lamb

I broke from the womb of my mother
and ran up the early years
Until on the cliffs of seven,
with the gospel of senses scrying
The sun-flooded woodlands and valley,
I came with confusions of tears
Under three black hawks to my pet,
my baby-warm bottle lamb, dying.

He was torn with claws of his hanging,
talons ripping the soft wreck
Of his body anointed with blood.
I found his eyelids sinking
On curious sleep. Oh, then
I awoke! I fell on his neck
And confounded the bleeding rose
of my early innocence, shrinking.

I ran from his claw-slit belly;
I ran from the pinkest prime
Incredible entrails dragged
in dust of the limestone cliff.
I cried the nudge of his young bleats,
puffing his sides at nighttime.
I ran to his tenderness once;
now I left him, awkward and stiff.

I ran from the tree and shade
of the juniper boughs where he lay;
I ran from the three dark wings,
still trapped in the shades of stones,
And I lay in the leaves of the earth
for a blasphemous long Sunday.
At last, when I saw him again,
it was only to bury his bones.



I dug an abstraction of grave
in erosions of one small head
And let that late wooly angel
down, while some ghost said, bow!
And still I am wandering home,
young seer gone blind in those dead
Miseries, crying, "God,
God, where are your mercies now?"

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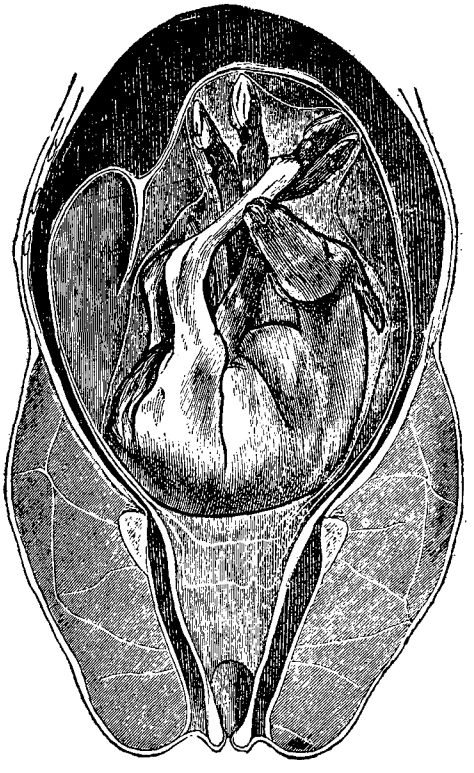
Sacrifice of My Young Mare, Great with Colt



The blue guts of the evening
Spilled from the belly of God,
As I walked alone with my father
Across our grassy valley
And into the muddy bottoms.

Almost beyond believing,
A mudhole rimmed with rocks
Had swallowed our colt-great filly
Up to her bloated belly.
They swam together, rotting.

She was still alive, but heaving,
Choked in her muddy cud,
And I cried to my father, "Father,
What can we do?" "No telling.
Now she's going. We've lost one."

No rope or machine extending,
No stay of her heart or blood,
No hand outreached with power
Could help, or could even rally
The blasted day we were caught in.

I stood on that edge, deceiving
Myself that the swollen pod
Could spill itself in the quick-mud
And walk from our grassy valley
To the upland hills and the barn.

But her muddy death, upcreeping,
Swallowed the blood of her womb;
It crept on her foam-wet withers,
The bursting head overwhelming
Then the last white eye, exploding,

Slipped under, beyond all seeing.
Caught there, in the belly of God
As I stood alone with my father,
I saw the blood of the mother
Bubble the pots of death.

They broke in dark circles, pleading
Completion in me. Unhoused,
The dark gods stood in the thickets.
My father said nothing. Aching,
I climbed the old slope toward home.

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Sacrifice of a Rainbow Trout

Suddenly, from the rocky spring
A trout hung, trembling, in the air,
A jewel to the morning sun;

And then upon the mossy banks,
Rainy with rainbows, up he leaped
And tumbled wildly in the grass.

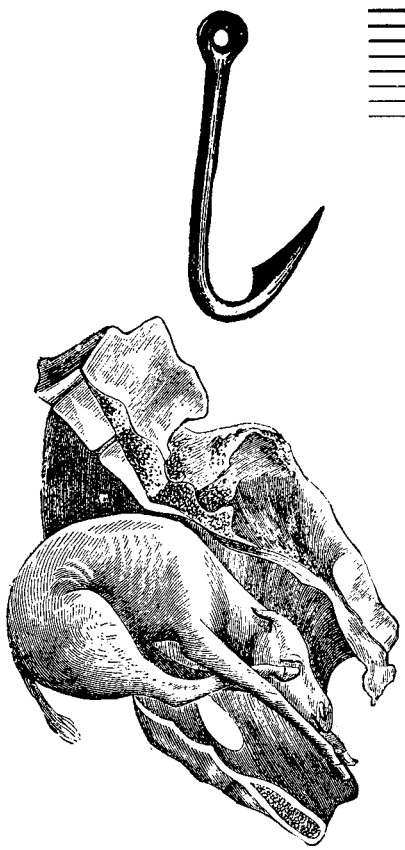
I ran to catch him where my hook
Pinned him behind a crusted rock
And ripped his mouth and gills apart.

I pulled his foaming stomach clean
And washed my fingers in the spring
And sat down and admired him.

His sunlit scales upon my hands,
I wrapped his flesh in leaves of elm
And homeward, singing, carried him.

I stripped him of his ivory bones,
Then held him, shining, to the fire
And tongued his body to my own.

And that was the supper that I had
While my imagination fed
Its silver hook upon the world.



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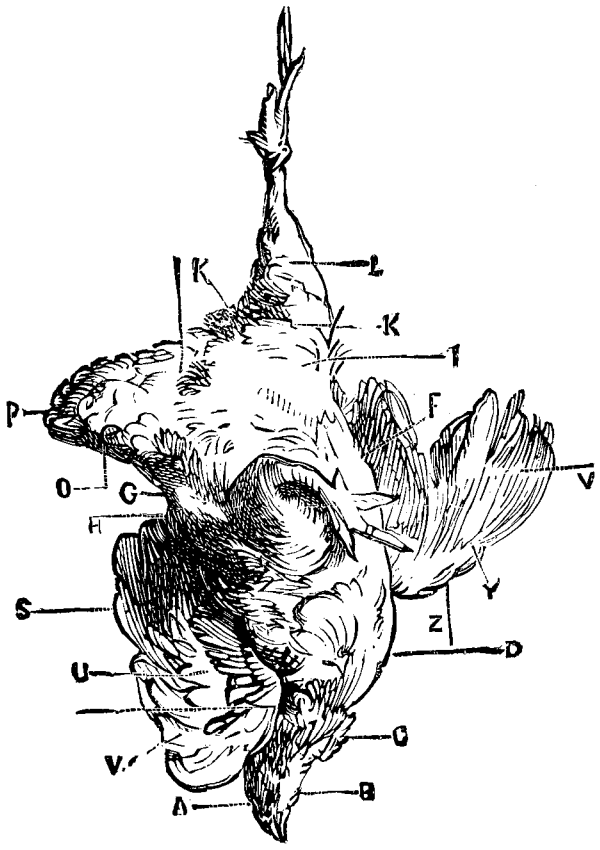
Sacrifice of My Dog, Rex



When my dog came whimpering out of the hayfields,
Home from the mower's flickering sickle,
He lay on the floor of the fragrant haybarn
With the bleeding stub of the foreleg quivering,
The pool of convulsive death surrounding
His white submissive eyes.

I heard him shout when he flushed a rabbit
In the honeyed webs of red-white clover.
I caught the quarry on quarry flashing.
He'll get him, I sang, and then it got him.
I froze where I stood, till his dark blood, flowing,
Ran like a sword at my side.

He drank his wound, but that solemn supper
Gagged in his throat, and the tongue of comfort
Lay from his mouth. I had pulled a thorn from
The new-lost paw when I saw him suffer.
I had kissed that foot and washed and anointed
Him under my whispered care.

And now it was lost in the fragrant hayfields
Where I ran out the honey of days in the clover;
And now he was going, that country greying
Under the edge of his eyes. Not knowing
Where then, or why, my small steps pointed
The trail of his blood with prayers.

They stumbled his death to his life for meaning,
Winding across the yard and the roadway,
Out to the grainfield and into the hayfield,
Until, somewhere, they were lost forever
In a crown of sun and a field of flowers,
And the ravenous sickle, reaping.

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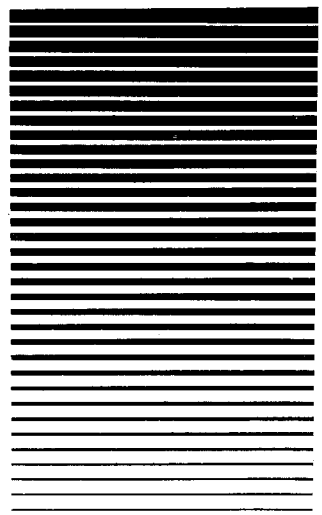
Sacrifice of the Dandelions



When all their gold blew up in a cloud
and threatened a silver blight on the land,
the entire neighborhood rose in arms
and took a hand.

From April we labored to do them in,
ripping their tongues from the spongy lawn
and dumping their heads in velvet piles
by the old trash bin.

In bags and buckets and wheelbarrow loads
we dug them out with knife and tine
and carted them off to the garbage stalls
to wilt and die.

Though with the mower I trimmed the lawn
to an inch of its life, those flowers grew
flat on the turf till, plant by plant,
we cut them through.

What pride and virtue, doing them in,
keeping our lawns entirely green,
graced by domestic flowers, sown
as those had not been.

When the view from the porch was purely our own,
not a yellow head on the verdant sheen,
we gathered praises from houses and barns,
being godly and clean.

Yet out in the pastures and barley fields
they gleamed in a thousand beds of gold,
and after a week rose up in a cloud—
Oh, we all grow old—

and sailed into silvery mats on our lawns
and clung to our pure green grass like a snare
to give us our virtue another year
and keep us right there.

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Wonder at the world's madness!
Then tell your heart
To toll most tenderly, and toss
In a kind of comic sadness
While we count our neighbor losses, part by part.
There is no loss until the final loss.

One lost his hand in a corn-shredder,
The clockwork claws
Striking with anonymity,
Measuring space before them
Beyond the saving speculative pause,
Surprising him, and still amazing me.

One lost his toe in a woodpile,
The indifferent axe
Pursuing the arc of the driven arm
Beyond the dry wood, splitting,
Having no mind for what its body lacks,
Steel head on wood, adjudicating harm.

One lost his arm in a flywheel;
The gasoline belt
Wrenched and ripped, stuttered and ran,
To grind the grain in the cornmill.
And that rude noise said what it had not felt
In that rude juncture for the assistant, man.

One lost his right leg under
A tractor's rim,
Muscle and bone dissenting there
In a circular steel tremor;
Invading him, it made discrete in him
That symbol of the body's messenger.

Sacrifice of My Neighbors

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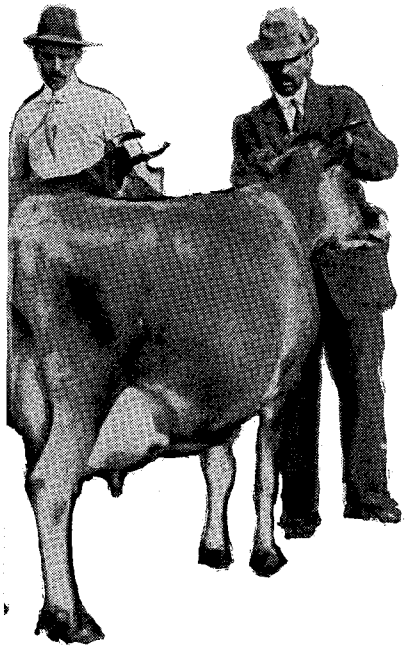

One lost his child in flood waters
When walls of rain
Collapsed on neighboring hills and streamed
Over the valley pastures.
He had not read the clouds as an ocean plain
Until the water crashed our hearts and screamed.

One lost his mind to his childhood.
We saw those dumb
Erosions backward from that shore
Where we had lately known him,
Being as strong and handsome as they come.
Now he is scarcely two-three years or more.

One lost his love to a madman
Who sped through night
With pistol and teeth flashing and went
Down with her death in the morning,
A darkness upon darkness, even in light,
Since no one who kept his mind guessed what it meant.

One lost his heart to a member
Who trembled his hope.
Oh Jesus, the miracles of men
Are blind in that great valley
Where time engages the eternal slope,
And once run down may not be wound again.

And I lost my fear in these losses.
Though they carouse
Stealthily with my neighbors, still
Many are not failing,
And I am surely walking in that house
Where mind will not, though all my body will.

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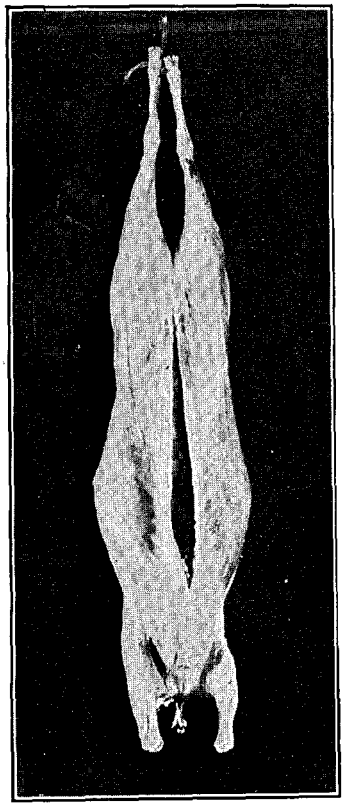

Sacrifice of a Flock of Sheep

The dogs broke up our sheep in the lambing time of the year;
Out the wild woods they fled to limestone bluffs, pell-mell,
And over the cliff they went, the whole flock mad with fear.

They felt the springing pain of the bursting month was near,
And dumbly they saw themselves caught up in the general
swell,
But dogs broke up our sheep in the lambing time of the year.

All that the white domestic and heavy ewes would hear
Upon any April evening was the tinkling low sheep bell,
But over the cliff they went, the whole flock mad with fear.

Eyes and bleats were mild, and they stepped daintily here
As though they trusted masters. They trusted them too well,
And dogs broke up our sheep in the lambing time of the year.

What maddens gentle natures? What made them wildly steer
Into the upper woodlands? Who caught them in his spell?
Over the cliff they went, the whole flock mad with fear.

There they lie with their wombs in the double death we fear
Where time and occasion take a toll we can scarcely tell;
The dogs broke up our sheep in the lambing time of the year,
And over the cliff they went, the whole flock mad with fear.

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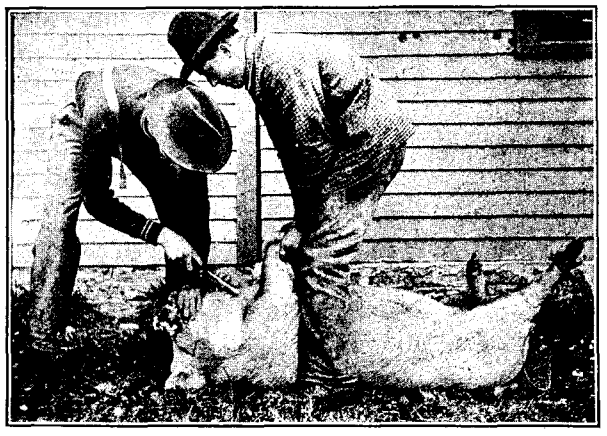
Sacrifice of Aunt Marie

My anemic aunt was alone in her flower garden
(Roses, petunias, wealthies, foxcomb and phlox)
On a Fourth-of-July that always seems fragrant with bloom,
When all of her nephews crept from the north of her house
(Cherries and winesaps, spearmint and red four-o'clocks)
And threw their firearms round in a crackerjack boom.

None of us looked, but Oh with what brilliance we ran
(Jellies and jonathans, peppermint, lilacs and mums)
And perched on our naughtiest wits by the Bear Creek rocks
And laughed till the sun set. Then we went back to look
(Thornwood, bleeding hearts, bittersweet, currants and
plums),
And three days later we lowered her down in a box.

The old ladies patted us gently upon our heads
(Laces and liniment, cosmos and hoarhounds and thyme)
Where we sat alone in the shade of her northernmost doors.
The old men nodded and slyly glanced at their clocks
(Oh, gardens of heartsease, rainbowing honey of time),
And when we grew up we all went off to the wars.



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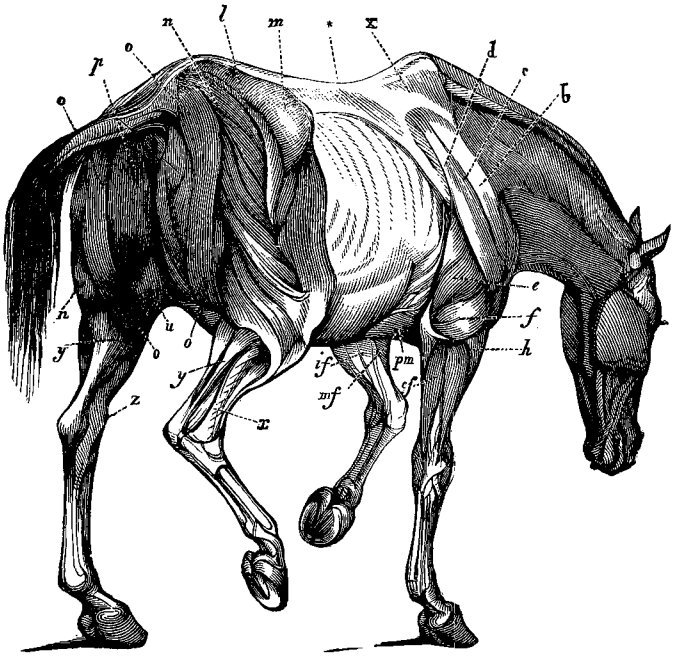
Sacrifice of the Sparrows of the Field

My mother and sisters washed out each other's
Hair in sweet lemons and purest rainwaters;
And so did the neighboring girls and their mothers,
Lounging on porchswings on long summer mornings.
    Whenever the rain fell
    They ran with pails full
    Of water from eavespouts
    Pouring in cisterns.
When I dribbled a milkwhitened pebble downward
Into the softwater well depth, it whispered
In circles of girlfaces, wreathed and laughing;
Maybe it didn't, and maybe it mattered.
    But sparrows clogging
    The eavetroughs hanging
    Under our houses
    Were clouding our waters.
Horse hair and barn straw and cow dung together
They wove into cozy egg homes as they twittered,
And downy cock feathers in scissor-beaks shredded,
With mosses and mudroots packed in for filler.
    Dark summer showers
    And spouting baubles
    Broke from our shingles
    On sisters and mothers.



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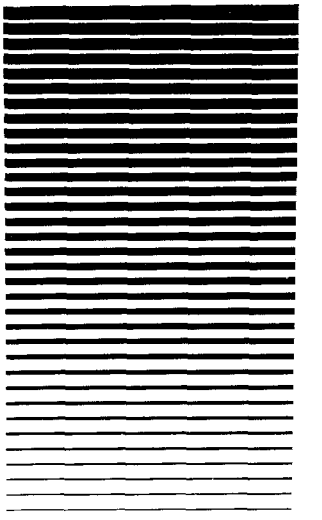

Whenever straight hair hung stringy and oily
My father and brothers were cursing the sparrows,
And up in the rain went the twin-sliding ladders,
And down came the baby sparrows, splashing.
    Naked wet sorrows,
    Babes in my palms, then,
    Bled out of tenderness.
    Dying becalmed them.
God knew that they clogged the troughs with odd odors
And, filthy with lice from their barnridden feathers,
Strained to our wells. Then sisters' and mothers'
Hair hung unwashed on their breasts and their shoulders.
    For whatever is hanging—
    Angel or evil—
    Over our eyelids,
    God must be answering.
In a crown of sweet Sundays, their services psalming
In wreaths of hair-presses and redolent showers,
Golden and brown under summerlace bonnets,
The rainwater mothers and sisters are singing
    Bird-warbled summer
    And rain-washed dripping
    In cisterns drumming.
    Bless the sweet sinner,
But our fine rural ladies must wash in rainwater.
We climb in our world, all brothers and fathers,
And run where it bells us, attacking and loving,
To sing the pure Sunday of sisters and mothers.

And sleep out the years in the arms of our lovers.

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Sacrifice of a Red Squirrel

Leaping from oak to oak, tangled-up in the woods,
Grey squirrels and reds
Scrambled in elegant furs with nuts in their heads.
That was their life; they didn't know any other.
Spring, once arrayed
In sun-checkered flowers, stood in its climate of shade
Crying,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

Three boys strolled up to the woods from neighboring farms
With a twenty-two gun.
They wanted a red squirrel fur. Red squirrel, run!
That was their life. Why should they learn of another?
Quick targets in trees
Were trophies of summer, red squirrels the rarest of these,
Crying,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

Bang went the gun. Grey squirrels ran into their holes;
And red squirrel now,
With his front leg flapping, clung to the uppermost bough
Quivering with life. If he would know of another
Some instinct could hide
An eye of himself around on the opposite side,
Crying,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

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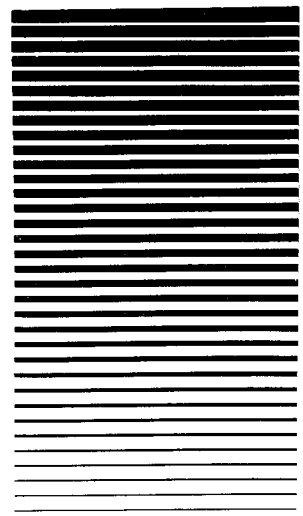

Red was the sheen of his coat; then it glistened in sun
Redder than red;
Teetering high on his claws, he chattered and bled
And hung to his home. How could he cling to another?
Then up came a stone
And tickled the paw of the leg with the bullet-hung bone,
Crying,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

Then up came showers of stones and bangs from the gun,
Shouts from the boys,
And the green home trembled over that chaos of noise.
Alive to this life, and not having known any other,
Red squirrel, come down;
Crawl at their feet and ride in their sack to the town,
Crying,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

And now in their halls he hangs on a missile of skins,
While mere boys comb
The wing-diving furs that flew in the airiest home.
And that is their life; they still do not know any other.
Oh, wild riddled woods,
Autumnal with reds, quake in your great green hoods,
And cry,
Squirrels, beware, beware;
Red squirrel, run!
The fixed ideas are coming to hunt you down.

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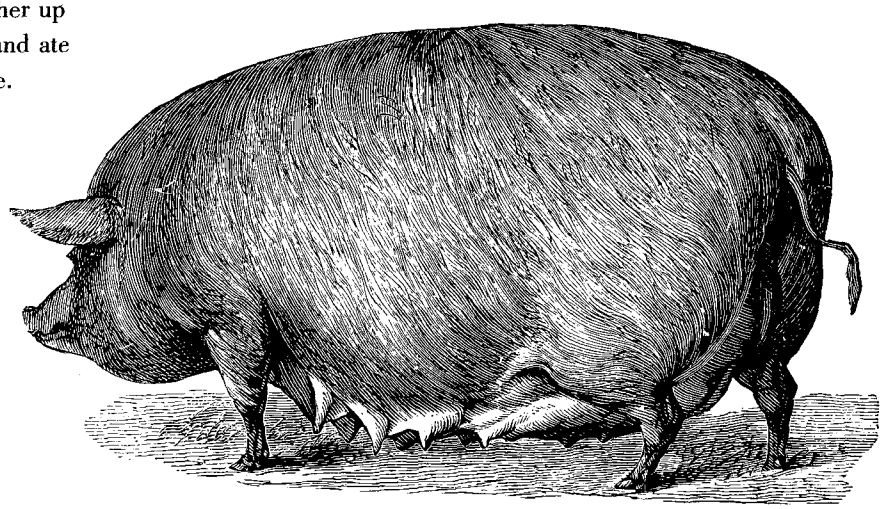
Sacrifice of the Old Sow

They said she was wild when the old sow ate the pigs
She farrowed into her straw in the stock-warm barn
Early in March. I caught her crunching the last
One in her jaws, then clung to the filthy patched
Gate and swallowed my breaking new-born tears.

My brother rushed at the sow, "You goddamn bitch,"
Jabbing his pitchfork in the bloodmother's flank;
"You devil, you goddamn devil," my brother screamed,
Trumpeting all the four ends of her pen
Wherever she crashed, "You bitch, you goddamn bitch."

I squeezed my eyes again at the rawest noise
Flung like manure on the squealing boards.
How could I know, my small hands to my heart,
That this huge barn-of-a-world was also stuffed
By Darwin and Marx and Freud at the feeding troughs?

And so, at last, there were only a hundred and twelve
Pigs to be raised. And since the old sow had fed
On the offspring she conceived, we strung her up
And slit her throat and stripped her down and ate
That succulent rib with which we kept alive.



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Judith Kegan Gardiner

Gail Godwin and Feminist Fiction

The Odd Woman, by Gail Godwin. Knopf. $8.95.

Girls can't be firemen, but Brenda saves a rabbit from a burning house and is accepted as a Saturday helper at the fire station in the Feminist Press's *Firegirl*. Jane rejects dolls and baking sets for Christmas and holds out for *A Train for Jane*. In another Feminist Press children's book, *Peter Learns to Crochet*. *My Body Feels Good* accompanies line drawings of children with texts like "I love to tumble down a hill" and "I like to play with my clitoris."

Most of these new children's books are aimed at girls, and their message is simple and direct: girls can do all the fun things boys do. We can all be "free to be you and me." These propaganda parables may be useful as first attacks on sexism, although so far not many of the Feminist Press children's stories have progressed to a plot or to interesting characters. Perhaps the women writing these new children's stories are reassured by the clarity of their vision of transformed sex roles. Many of the rest of us are not so sure. Several contemporary women writers have turned to "confessional" or autobiographical fiction as a vehicle for exorcising the bad old ways while searching for new models. "When I get depressed (which is often not disconnected from thoughts of my Women's Role)," wrote Gail Godwin, "I think of Doris Lessing. . . ." (*NAR*, Summer 1971).

Godwin's current novel, *The Odd Woman*, is a deliberate contribution to fiction about women's roles that tries to explore past the easy assurances of "free to be you and me." The book starts like a naturalist novel with everything specified and placed. "On a mid-January morning in the early nineteen-seventies, at 2 A.M., Central Standard Time, Jane Clifford lay awake in a Midwestern university town, thinking about insomnia . . ." and about the Enema Bandit possibly lurking outside her window. A thirty-two-year-old single woman, Jane teaches Women in Literature courses and looks to the women she knows and to nineteenth-century fiction to find patterns for her life. Her mother Kitty phones to tell her that her grandmother has just died, and Jane flies to North Carolina for Edith's funeral, spending days trying anxiously—and successfully—to reëstablish loving contact with her mother. Kitty, also a teacher, wrote popular love stories until she married Jane's stepfather; after three more children, she "jilted" Ray for God. Jane borrows $500 from her stepfather, who thinks she needs it for an abortion, to fly to New York for her fourteenth brief tryst with her married lover, an angel-faced, middle-aged art professor named Gabriel Weeks.

The couple shares an afternoon of lovemaking at a hotel. The next day Jane tries to anchor an identity for herself by shopping for clothes, by browsing in the public library, and finally by visiting an old melodrama villain who may have eloped with her great aunt. Gabriel postpones his dinner with Jane because he has run into an embarrassing colleague, and, tired of being the "Understanding Mistress", Jane checks out. On her way home, she stops in Chicago overnight with her college friend Gerda Mulvaney, who edits a feminist newspaper called *Feme Sole*. Repelled by Gerda's hostility to her and to men, Jane returns to her teaching job and her status as an "odd" or single woman. The book ends with Jane home in bed, comfortable with her insomnia and her fantasies of the Enema Bandit.

The novel follows Jane around the country for one week, letting her thoughts flash back to her childhood, to her engagement in England, and to her first meeting with Gabriel at the Modern Language Association Convention two years earlier. *The Odd Woman* is structured, then, as the familiar Voyage in Search of an Identity, like the flashier popular novels *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen* and *Fear of Flying*. It goes beyond these novels, however, as a painstaking and honest, sometimes slow, attempt to set up some "patterns of desire" meaningful to the woman who has grown to question the traditional roles.

Current feminist fiction offers few viable models for the new woman. Marge Piercy's *Small Changes* has become a favorite in some circles, despite its wooden writing, because it makes an effort in that direction: one character eventually attains a career and a plausible heterosexual friendship, and another is magically transformed into a creative and self-reliant lesbian, though most of the novel exposes the devastation of traditional female roles and the exploitiveness of man-woman relationships. Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* has perhaps been so popular because it awards the heroine a cheerfully libidinous sex life and the appearance of "liberation", though it substitutes these appearances for a serious rethinking of women's identity. Many of today's women's novels present only the discarded alternatives, so that these books are filled with funny, vengeful portraits of awful men—tightwads, bastards, studs, and creeps—getting away with murder against somewhat vague women who don't quite seem to deserve it. After a while these novels blur. In all of them, it seems, the husband steadily types his thesis while the heroine sobs despair and then walks out. Many of the novels only slam Nora's door again; sometimes they let her return home after a suitable fling, an older and perhaps wiser woman.

But the heart is a lonely huntress, and the books which document the disaster of women's traditional roles fuel anger but do not satisfy the quest for new models. Godwin's highly praised earlier work foreshadows many of the themes and characters of *The Odd Woman*. More finished and perfect than her somewhat awkward third novel, Godwin's earlier writings remain distanced by the author's irony and wit. Like so much contemporary fiction, Godwin's earlier writings draw eerie and high comic "bad

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examples" through which Godwin seems to have worked before allowing herself *The Odd Woman*'s more tentative and open exploration of woman's condition.

* * *

Some of Godwin's earlier magazine fiction is merely slick, like "St. George," in which a lonely English graduate student grows a jewel-eating dragon. Even this story displays one of Godwin's frequent themes, the lonely woman waiting for her man. Often the mistress of a married man centers her existence on her absent lover, as does the unnamed speaker of "My Lover, His Summer Vacation." If the mistress is nameless and peripheral, the woman who fulfills the traditional roles of wife and mother is often annihilated by them in Godwin's fiction. In one of her most powerful stories, the nameless "A Sorrowful Woman" withdraws from her family and finally kills herself after preparing a last sacrificial feast for her husband and son. The heroine of "Interstices" breaks down from the pressure of "containing the existence" of her son, whose birth brought her marriage to a rich playboy instead of a career as an artist. The woman tells her boy that she loves him "so much that it made her sick," and she fantasizes poisoning herself and her family with a dinner of rotten meat so that their "angels" will ascend from the table.

In a review of Joyce Carol Oates (*NAR*, Winter 1971), Godwin distinguished that kind of fiction which "orders and defines the overwhelming data of experience" from that, like Oates's, which disarranges things and produces "new ranges of tension" in the reader. Godwin's short fiction and her first two novels produce such new tensions for the reader. In *The Perfectionists* (1970), a young woman named Dane marries a British psychoanalyst who "explains people to themselves." He at first seems an unconventional genius, later a warped domestic tyrant. The husband desires total "union" with Dane, which she experiences as "invasion", a negation of her own personality. The "shared universe" he wants with her comes to seem more and more stifling as they are isolated on a hot Mediterranean vacation together. The doctor has an illegitimate three-year-old son who does not speak and who thus maintains his autonomy more successfully than the young wife, though at the price of his own madness.

Glass People (1972) is very similar to *The Odd Woman* in its main action, but it keeps its characters and emotions safely under, and made of, glass. The beautiful Francesca has become "paralyzed" into inaction by her perfectionist husband, a middle-aged California politician who does all the cooking and housework and only asks that she remain beautiful for him. She goes East to visit her mother Kate, who once ruled as a sovereign of face creams, fine perfumes, and the arcana of catching men. Kate, like Jane's mother Kitty, has remarried an impossible stepfather, here a jolly health food crank who treats his numbed and pregnant wife like a princess. Francesca then flies to New York, has a weekend affair with a traveling businessman, is humiliated at a personnel office, and becomes an "amanuensis" and housekeeper for a sloppy visionary with a shaved head. Francesca gets sick and lets her husband take her back. He dresses her as a Byzantine madonna, "kneeling at her feet" to adore her; he treats her subsequent pregnancy as a "miracle" which precludes any further sexual contact with her. By the end of the novel, Francesca has agreed to whirl in his circle of the Inferno. Having easily given up her attempt to find her own identity, she collaborates in her objectification as her husband's sexual fetish and virgin wife.

Godwin's first two novels are shorter and simpler than *The Odd Woman*. Each focuses on a single dyad, the neurotic heterosexual couple of intrusive husband and obliterated wife. The chief difference between these books and *The Odd Woman* is in the distancing of the earlier heroines. In particular, Francesca is described with the unconvincing condescension with which the overly thoughtful treat the unthinking. Despite her abortive voyage to find herself, she is one of "them", not, like the Odd Woman, one of "us".

Fortunately, Godwin grew dissatisfied with her neat, tension-producing fiction. She wants answers, and in *The Odd Woman* she allows an apparently autobiographical heroine to look for some in a looser, more personal kind of fiction. In her earlier work, Godwin had used Lessing as a source, for example, by picking up the idea of Lessing's "Room Nineteen" for her own story, "A Sorrowful Woman." In *The Odd Woman* Godwin returns to Lessing more profoundly as a model for engaged feminist fiction. Godwin reports that she first read *The Golden Notebook* as a novel that could "save your life":

> For myself I say this: that woman gives me the courage I need to grow old speaking my own voracious and sometimes embarrassing claims as a woman, as an artist, as a human being.

Although Jane Clifford is not, thankfully, a novelist, "her profession was words." Through Jane, Godwin permits herself to explore not only women's life choices, but also the significances of one's choice of literary models. Lessing has obviously mothered Godwin's approach to fiction, but Godwin does not mention her in the novels. Instead she recurs constantly to the nineteenth-century authors who appear to be her academic specialty and who certainly are her heroines'. The perfectionist's wife loves *Jane Eyre*, and the mistress of "My Lover, His Summer Vacation" writes Charlotte Brontë that now "nice girls" do it. "M. Evans," the ugly, impossible writer of *Glass People*, seems to be a bitter, self-directed joke at Godwin's intense admiration for George Eliot.

Jane Clifford keeps comparing herself to her nineteenth-century authors and literary characters. She makes a chart from George Gissing's Victorian novel of single women, *The Odd Women*, crossing out as inapplicable to herself the characters' choices of regression, renunciation, or sublimation for a cause. Jane explains to her colleague Sonia Marks:

> What I like about Gissing is that he lets his characters think. They come to horrible ends, most of them, but they keep track of themselves so beautifully along the way. And he writes women well. He doesn't keep the sexual ironic distance of many male writers when writing about female characters.

Obviously Godwin likes letting her characters think, and she has learned in *The Odd Woman* to lessen her own "sexual ironic distance" from her characters. Jane chose Gissing's novel as a class text because its "unrelenting pessimism" was a challenge, just as, conversely, she chose her lover because he represented "optimism". Similarly, Jane did her dissertation on the theme of guilt in George Eliot's novels, yet what fascinates her about Eliot is her personal fulfillment. If George Eliot could have twenty-five years of creativity and "outrageous happiness" with a married lover, is the same thing possible for a twentieth-century teacher?

* * *

Godwin's fascination with nineteenth-century writing lures her into permitting herself undigested nonfictional lumps in *The Odd Woman*, including miniature critical essays, excurses on the moral dilemmas of paper grading—for the deprived, flunking black girl, for example—and a parody of a plagiarized pornographic novel with an academic setting, complete with jacket

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blurbs. Another problem of *The Odd Woman* arises from its pat opposition between the nineteenth-century fiction the heroine teaches and her vision of life—that is, of twentieth-century fiction. The nineteenth-century novel is orderly and complete, and its personalities are stable. In contrast, then, modern personality is blurred into the eternal present, like Gabriel's, or multiple and complex, like Jane's.

Despite its more engaged tone, *The Odd Woman* can still be seen, like Godwin's earlier novels, through the converging and opposed modes of objective case study and external allegory. For all her "unclear, undefined, unresolved self ", Jane Clifford shares many personality traits with the neurotics of Godwin's earlier fiction. Many of her characters are "anal compulsives" or "anal erotics". The main men of all three novels are "perfectionists", schememakers who fit people into elaborate categories. The glass man cannot allow his beloved to hear him defecating; neither can Jane Clifford. A bout of diarrhea separates the glass woman from her lover. Jane begins and ends her book with erotic fantasies about the Enema Bandit, while Jane's elaborate drawings of "Penis Park", like her mother's unrepressed college diary, are flushed down the toilet until they plug it up. "Purity" and "decorum" obsess Jane, as they did some of Godwin's earlier characters. In "Interstices" sex and life maddened Lucy, who preferred to be a bodiless "angel". Jane and Gabriel see each other as "angels", too, and Kitty has found sanctity by renouncing desire. When Jane was finishing her dissertation, she felt clean, pure, frozen and snow-like, drinking milk and living in asexual isolation.

A certain enactment of the Oedipal romance, too, appears to color the psychological possibilities open to Godwin's characters. In both *Glass People* and *The Odd Woman* the heroines have loving widowed mothers who withdraw from their daughters when they remarry. Although the stepfathers are ridiculous villains, the heroines persistently seek "father figures" as their husbands and lovers—apparently benevolent, patriarchal older men.

There are no tolerable marriages in Godwin's work, and the only attractive lovers are married to other women. This presentation limits each character's options as she searches for her identity. For whatever her personal kinks, Jane Clifford presents herself as Everywoman, or at least as every modern single intelligent woman, trying to choose models for her "best life". She is tempted by various voices and choices—marriage or mistresshood, professionalism or feminism. Like the morality play she sometimes sees herself in, Jane encounters or personifies, and then rejects, one life choice after another. Jane envies her colleague Sonia Marks, a successful scholar, teacher, and mother who married her married lover, but Sonia's personality seems inaccessible to Jane, who is haunted by the "many selves that make solitary living such a crowded occupation".

While waiting for Gabriel in New York, Jane tries on her grandmother's method of asserting her identity by going shopping, being "feminine". One of the best chapters in the book recounts Jane's growing panic at Saks when "nothing fits", and she cannot choose an image of herself to clothe. Next she tries to objectify her condition by becoming the intellectual researcher, the pure frozen mind that wrote her dissertation. (Rather too many of the characters are academics—Jane, her friends, her lover, her mother, her mother's lover.) Jane tries to track down a family mystery by meeting the melodrama villain who seduced and abandoned her great aunt Cleva sixty years earlier. But she fails as an objective sleuth. The "villain" is a delightful, if lonely, nonagenarian who can't remember the great aunt's name —the ultimate blow to a woman's identity—but then who may not be the right villain after all. The nineteenth-century moral absolutes are useless, and melodrama becomes a psychologically ambiguous "naturalism of dreams".

Jane's last encounter, with her feminist friend, is the least satisfactory, both for Jane and for the reader. Gerda, the feminist editor, is a nasty, cursing, possessive harpy who writes articles on masturbating with a vibrator. Godwin once wrote distastefully of a woman's group that read *The Golden Notebook* exclusively for its views on orgasm and menstruation, that is, on "women's plumbing". Her treatment of the feminists is as reductive as their reading of Lessing, although Godwin does give a sympathetic portrait of the older woman who became a housemother to *Feme Sole* after her husband left her for a younger woman.

* * *

But if the feminist novel can "order the overwhelming data of experience" for us as women readers, it does not do so obviously and schematically, by labeling psychoanalytic syndromes to avoid or by drawing charts of women's choices like Jane's graph of Gissing's novel. Instead, the defining characteristic of feminist fiction lies in the ordering of experience that takes place through expressive mirroring, through the help a sufficiently profound normative character gives us, as we identify with her, in clarifying an identity of our own. In this sense *The Odd Woman*, despite Godwin's obvious bias against feminist extremists, is feminist fiction. It is not the people Jane meets that provide the important alternative roles for her, but the people she *is*, in interaction with their expectations and demands.

The central concern of *The Odd Woman* is the formation of an independent identity. That is also the central concern of women's psychology in contemporary culture. "Various kinds of evidence suggest that separation from the mother, the breaking of dependence, the establishment and maintenance of a constantly individuated sense of self remain difficult psychological issues for Western middle-class women," writes Nancy Chodorow in a recent review of psychoanalytic and anthropological theories (*Woman, Culture & Society*, 1974). Chodorow stresses the problematic nature of the mother-daughter tie, especially in cultures like ours which devalue the mother's work and hence her personality, and she speaks of the "loss of self in overwhelming responsibility for and connection with others", that is, in modern motherhood and wifehood, described by women writers like Beauvoir, Chopin, Lessing, Olsen, Stead, and Woolf. And, one could add, Godwin.

The Odd Woman treats the primary female triangle—self, mother, man —particularly well. In several current women's novels, the death of the heroine's mother, often a rejecting or possessive demon, frees the heroine for heterosexual love. *The Odd Woman* kills the heroine's perfectly "feminine" grandmother, who had minded Jane "like a mother". "Achieving death, Edith had rid herself at last of troublesome womanhood." Jane gets to work through her feelings toward the mother-who-must-be-rejected, then, while preserving other aspects of mothering in her relationship with Kitty.

> When Edith died, mother and daughter took their own farewells to certain roles in their lives. . . . As for Jane, she now felt exposed at both ends of her life. She was no one's grandchild anymore, and yet she was not—perhaps never would be—anyone's mother.

Her mother is the only person who openly loves Jane and the only person to whom she can openly express her own

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love. Kitty is the most potent example and warning for Jane. Between generations in her own eyes, Kitty once "wanted it all. I wanted love. I wanted a career. I wanted everything eternally beautiful and with no compromise. . . . I wanted so many things it makes me sick to remember." Kitty betrayed Jane, and herself, by renouncing all these. Like the women in the short stories she used to write, Kitty threw her own interests "out the window" when the man came along, and later became a devout Catholic and a peacemaker between her jealous husband and her disparate children. The relationship between Jane and her mother is the finest thing in the book. As in all of Godwin's fiction, the difficulty of fashioning an identity through the continuity of devalued mothers and daughters is clear, yet Jane's mothers remain loving and attractive, complex people, not caricatures.

Both her mother and grandmother tell Jane that she is not suited to having children. "Jane's impetus, her goal, had been, for so long, to become her own woman" that she is unsure if she will ever get beyond single "oddity" to "join or pair or duplicate herself". She is afraid that motherhood, like sexual love, will destroy her identity, yet she thinks of loneliness ultimately in terms of mothering: "Was she, then, doomed always to be her own child, the 'only lonely'?"

Like most women, Jane thinks that her man is the most important person to her. Her conscious preoccupation is whether her lover will leave his wife to marry her. Yet all of Jane's enduring and necessary relationships are with women, and it seems clear that she will only be able to love a real man, rather than a fantasy, after she creates her own identity on the female line. After breaking through competitiveness and envy to become friends with her colleague Sonia, Jane wonders why women can trust one another more than they can men. "Why isn't this possible with men, she thought, this getting down to it without fear of the consequences." In England some years earlier, Jane was engaged to a dull athlete because his mother shared her passion for George Eliot. At that time it seemed natural to Jane that "men were for husbands, other women were for talking to."

Jane is ambivalent about men. She pompously refutes Gerda:

> She was not sure she wanted to sacrifice one god to another, or one sex to another. She wanted, if possible, both sexes and all the gods working for her.

Yet there are times when she sees "all men as inept, inferior, but nonetheless villains". In contrast to her relationship with her mother, Jane cannot confront her lover directly, cannot tell him she loves him or ask for his love. She can only "dream him" and "undream him". "Don't you want to be happy?" people keep asking Jane. She does. She wants "patterns of desire". She continues to want, as her mother once did, "everything", including men, open love, stability, and a creative occupation. Jane believes "most women can identify with heroines who can learn to live without marriage; but not so many want to live without love of any kind." *The Odd Woman* advances significantly over Godwin's earlier work, and over much other feminist fiction, because it still considers heterosexual love indispensable and perhaps even possible.

Gabriel won Jane's attention first because of his optimism, and secondly because he was a scholar of love. He categorizes love in PreRaphaelite paintings into three kinds, the "idyllic", in which the lover keeps the beloved on the "altar of worship and unsatiated desire"; the "sympathetic", in which the lover loses himself "in affirming kinship with the world essences"; and "mirror love", in which the "soul . . . recognizes itself in another". Jane's and Gabriel's love has been "idyllic". Jane dreamed Gabriel into her lover after hearing him lecture, and for two years she kept them decorous and distant so that their love could stay "fresh". Then the strain of projecting her contradictory fantasies on a middle-aged man became too much. Gabriel may be a "near-sighted fool" or a "far-sighted genius", but he is not a soul-sucking dominator like the men of Godwin's earlier novels. He is blurry only because that was the sort of lover Jane needed to create for herself.

* * *

The persistent question in Godwin's fiction is whether one can find anybody else without losing oneself. Her work documents again and again the fear that love means fusion and hence loss of identity. Jane leaves Gabriel the day after she first experiences the abandonment of orgasm and hours after he first abandons her by delaying a date. "It *was* death," she thinks, "nullifying yourself while a man lived his life away from you." As far as the novel takes her, Jane is her own woman, but she has not managed to achieve an identity for herself which can relate genuinely and intimately to a man without fearing annihilation.

The Odd Woman is perhaps so brutal to the feminist alternative because it is so tempting. Gerda Mulvaney is described as a look-alike for Jane, and her paper *Feme Sole* is almost a translation of "Odd Woman." Gerda is not a lesbian; she is willing to get sexual gratification and financial and professional support from men. But her renunciation of much that Jane continues to desire is total and threatening:

> The thing you won't do around Gabriel is let him hear you shit. The thing you mean to him is a good fuck with a Ph.D. And the thing I've given up is all the *crap* we've been taught to call love.

Like most of us, Jane is unwilling to give up love, although she has only one example of true love to inspire her, that of Marian Evans and George Henry Lewes, who were "outrageously happy" together for twenty-five years in a relationship of androgynous mothering and reciprocity. It is Godwin's favorite example. In *Ms.* she lauded the "remarkable synthesis . . . in which Lewes' inner woman tended Marian's inner man" and liberated the creative potentials of both. "She is my heroine . . . ," Godwin wrote, "but her heroines are not . . . . As a novelist myself—and one who has, so far, denied my heroines the crucial strengths and options I myself have needed—I am fascinated by this question of why so many of us deny our heroines what we refuse to deny ourselves." Jane Clifford has the "courage to walk out" as an independent woman. She has not yet found all the "crucial strengths and options" the new woman needs.

Godwin's first two books were precocious, the polish of the novels ironically reflected by the *Perfectionists* and *Glass People* of the titles. *The Odd Woman* is a more adolescent and more promising book. It seems to work out some of the autobiographical *angst* necessary to creating real characters, characters like oneself instead of easily controlled and wittily described zombies. In *The Odd Woman* Godwin takes up current issues of women's identity through a character capable of sustaining our engaged interest and sympathy. At thirty-two, the age at which Marian Evans first met George Henry Lewes, Jane Clifford is not yet the kind of heroine Godwin seems to be working toward. However, *The Odd Woman* points in a satisfying direction as feminist fiction. Gail Godwin is an ambitious novelist, and she seems to know where she wants to go.

—Judith Kegan Gardiner

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The American Eve Misunderstood

The American Eve in Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914, by Ernest Earnest. Illinois. $9.50

In 1969 Women's Studies began as an academic discipline with 17 courses. In 1975 the number of courses, a large percentage of them in the humanities and social sciences, totals over 4500. A proliferation of materials related to Women's Studies has accompanied the rapid growth in courses. Literary scholars in particular have found themselves in a unique position with regard to materials. Not only do they have readily at hand numbers of literary works by women, but also quantities of secondary works about women writers and heroines. Unlike the social historians who have had to scour available but hitherto generally disregarded sources in order to describe women's actual role in history, economics, and politics, literary critics have always included women writers and characters in their canon of materials. This inclusion works to the critics' advantage in that they are already familiar with the roles women have played in literature. It can also work to their disadvantage; such familiarity may preclude the formulation of a feminist interpretation or ideology which awakens readers to an awareness that women are, first and foremost, human beings.

A case in point is Ernest Earnest's *The American Eve in Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914*, an ambitious attempt to discover what American girls and women were actually like between the Revolution and World War I. His means of discovering the real American Eve consists of contrasting the images of women in the fiction of the period with the actual lives reflected in diaries, memoirs, letters, and biographies. For instance, he notes that in the sentimental tradition novelists represent their heroines as solemn and sedentary, then shows that diary entries of girls such as Julia Newberry and Adelle Biddle disprove this image. They ran, rowed, and bowled; they read books their brothers had brought home from college; they rode horses astride; they picnicked in mixed company.

In addition to showing the inaccuracy of this and other images of women, Earnest contrasts the limited number of images of women in fiction with the infinite variety of women who actually existed. He points out that Howells —whose women characters he finds to be invariably ignorant, irrational and incompetent—not only failed to put one college-trained woman in his novels, but "it would seem that he never met one". Neither, apparently, had Howells or other major novelists often met other kinds of women, or, if they did, they either caricatured them, as James did the suffragists in *The Bostonians*, or belittled them, as Howells did the woman physician in *Dr. Breen's Practice*.

The American Eve is in reality less an analysis of contrasts between reality and fiction than "an examination of the actual girls and women". Unlike William Wasserstrom's *Heiress of All Ages*, a study of fictional characters, Earnest's book is primarily a study of historical people. One result of such emphasis is that the book begins to read like a *Who's Who*, or, more precisely, a listing of women from *Notable American Women*. Earnest pursues at length the number and variety of women whom the novelists overlooked: he lists many of those from Martha Washington's "revolutionary court", those who advocated education for women, those who entered professions previously restricted to men, those who campaigned for reform and suffrage. Another result is that large sections of the book, as when he details the conflicts between the two suffrage groups, read like popular political and social history rather than an analytical study of the contrasts between fiction and fact. Besides, these notable women from Abigail Adams on have been subjects of intensive study elsewhere and the eras or movements they have been associated with have been comprehensively analyzed; that novelists neglected them is scarcely a reason for the broad survey of historical women Earnest presents.

Earnest's decision to focus primarily on historical lives is significant in that it highlights a yet unresolved problem created by scholars who, like Earnest, insist on dealing first with a woman's sex and then with her person. The problem is complicated because one of the bases for a Women's Studies approach is the recognition that women are humans whose roles and contributions are different from those of the generic "man" covered in courses such as "The History of Man" and "Man in Society". As Gerda Lerner points out in "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History", historians and biographers do indeed have to make psychological judgments about women and their sexual lives but—and she stresses this point—only when such judgments are applicable. One is bewildered by Earnest's assumption that a woman's relationship with men is inevitably relevant to her career. He repeatedly avers that one of the characteristics most evident about successful American women has been their close relationships with their fathers and brothers and, where appropriate, their husbands. In his chapter "The Door Openers", for instance, he observes that the successful "reformers" Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, Sarah Josepha Hale, and Elizabeth Blackwell had each had close ties with their fathers and brothers. On the contrary, relatively unsuccessful "militants" like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone "had felt put upon as young girls; they had relatively unsympathetic fathers".

Relationships with men are not all Earnest focuses on with respect to women's sexual being. He suggests or traces in detail wherever he can whatever Lesbian tendencies he finds in women. As one of many examples, he quotes a letter in which Susan B. Anthony chides Lucy Stone for having had a baby; she says that neither of them have time for such personal matters. Earnest introduces this quotation with the comment that "it requires no great psychological insights to see Freudian implications in Susan's reaction" and then goes on to amplify those implications by stating that "Susan's estrangement from Anna Dickinson also suggests sexual jealousy". He shows that some women express their sexual frustration by taking on causes. Dorothea Dix "was one of those persons whose neurotic compulsions lead them to channel their energies into various causes". As one reads through the sections on historical women, one realizes that Earnest is as intent on breaking down some of the images that surround such notable women as Clara Barton (who, as he is at

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pains to show, did not found the Red Cross) and M. Carey Thomas ("a kind of female dragon who confirmed masculine prejudices against college women") as he is on showing the falsity of the images of women the novelists had projected.

At this point one is forced to question first of all whether Susan B. Anthony's sexual behavior is any more relevant to her social programs than Thomas Jefferson's sexual behavior is relevant to his political philosophy. Of more importance, one wonders why Earnest feels it is necessary to debunk the historical images of women like Clara Barton and M. Carey Thomas in a study whose objective is to reveal the inaccuracies of fictional portrayals of women. Some readers will also detect an animosity toward women who stepped into the public arena as opposed to those who, like Abigail Adams, chose to work behind the scenes and within the home. The irony that undercuts *The American Eve* is that a well intentioned effort to discover real American women only results in another projection of stereotypical female types: the neurotic reformer, the sexually frustrated single woman, the happily married woman who owes her success to the warm relationship she had as a child with the men in her family. In this respect Earnest really does little more than echo at great length what Basil Ransom, in James's *The Bostonians*, somewhat ambiguously says to women who aspire for political and social equality: "Ah, the bottom is a better place, depend on it, when from there you move the whole mass!"

Earnest's book thus reveals some of the advantages and disadvantages literary scholars have when writing on the images of women in literature. Their familiarity over the years with fictional images allows them to analyze with ease and certainty the differences they find between fact and fiction, but this ability creates false confidence when it allows them in each instance to continue working within the framework of traditional, *i.e.*, biological, interpretations of women's nature. The thrust behind Women's Studies and the call for new materials is only partially answered by Earnest's *The American Eve in Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914*. While it provides readings from little known journals and diaries as a contribution, it neglects that which is most basic to an understanding of women: a feminist ideology that points out new directions for literary criticism.

—*Grace O'Neill Hovet*

Ideology or Art: Women Novelists in the 1970s

There is no shortage of serious novels by women authors, but so many of them are the same. For the past year the archetype has been Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973), an intelligently written novel which maintained its "seriousness" by staying just off the best-seller lists for most of the season. "Alas! the love of women!" reads its opening epigraph from Byron, which might be fit matter for a novel except that it has been used so many times before, to the near exclusion of other topics—and to the near annihilation of aesthetic concerns. Love, especially with its sexual equipage, is one of the few subjects that rivets us without further work.

In the past decade feminism has appropriated to itself much of the rhetoric of the civil rights movement, and the pattern is carried over into literature as women fight for better representation in publishing lists, book reviews, and college courses. Such radicalization is needed to overcome years of inertia or direct oppression, but as a genre the novel always loses out. The causes of rhetoric drive authors to social realism, or out of the novel entirely into cultural and political commentary. And it's the commentary which inevitably gets the front page news and textbook assignments.

Fear of Flying is not exactly sociology, but it will accompany *Sexual Politics* and *The Female Eunuch* into a lot of sociology courses. It sticks to the situation a lot of people think sums up the American woman: "The fact was that we'd reached that crucial time in a marriage (five years and the sheets you got as wedding presents have just about worn thin) when it's time to decide whether to buy new sheets, have a baby perhaps, and live with each other's lunacy ever after—or else give up the ghost of the marriage (throw out the sheets) and start playing musical beds all over again." Against this the narrator projects her ideal of "the Zipless Fuck," zipless "because the incident has all the swift compression of a dream and is seemingly free of all remorse and guilt; because there is no talk of her late husband or of his fiancée; because there is no rationalizing; because there is no talk at *all*."

Erica Jong's novel searches for this Zipless Fuck. The sex is handled with all the candor of *Portnoy's Complaint*; more than one reviewer compared *Fear of Flying* to Philip Roth's novel, but the problem is that too many novels are like Roth's novel. To form a sub-genre by imitating only one facet of a good writer's minor work is to seriously handicap art. "I envy Alexander Portnoy," the heroine says. Apparently Portnoy's voice is the only suitable choice for the modern feminist confessional novel. It's a relief to have sex handled without either hysteria or coy restraint, and the flat recounting of exotic detail may in some cases be good rhetoric. But when the premise of the action is built upon the narrator's statement, "What doesn't come to fucking in the end?", fiction is reduced to an evenness bordering on the dull.

Isadora Wing, Jong's protagonist, talks about sex with few reservations or niceties. But she speaks with all the flatulence of a stenographer—which the author doesn't seem to realize. "Exit husband *numero uno*," a line direct from Saturday night television; or better yet, from an old Ann Sothern script (the one where she was somebody's secretary, and office intrigues filled up the half-hour for week after week). Verbal stylistics is reduced to the level of "How hypocritical to go upstairs with a man you don't want to fuck, leave the one you *do* sitting there alone, and then, in a state of great excitement, fuck the one you *don't* want to fuck while pretending he's the one you do." Think of Ann Sothern saying that, to the gushy receptionist or switch-board operator or whoever. For characterization it would be ok, but not as the voice of an entire novel. "Surrealism," Isadora says at one point, "is my life," but with all sense of style removed it seems like a burning giraffe painted by David, or by Winslow Homer.

Perhaps it is the explicit Portnoy impulse which corrupts this novel and others like it. "I have told these events as plainly as possible," we read, "because nothing I might say to embellish them could possibly make them more shocking." Beyond this, there is the public

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expectation that women think like this all the time, that the stereotype of raw concupiscence (parodied so deftly by Richard Brautigan, who gets rewarded with the irony of sexist putdowns) is enough to sustain a work of art. Jong reveals her ultimately social-realist attitude by coming out and saying it: "No writer can ever tell the truth about life, namely that it is much more interesting than any book. And no writer can tell the truth about people—which is that they are much more interesting than any *characters*." Then why write novels at all?

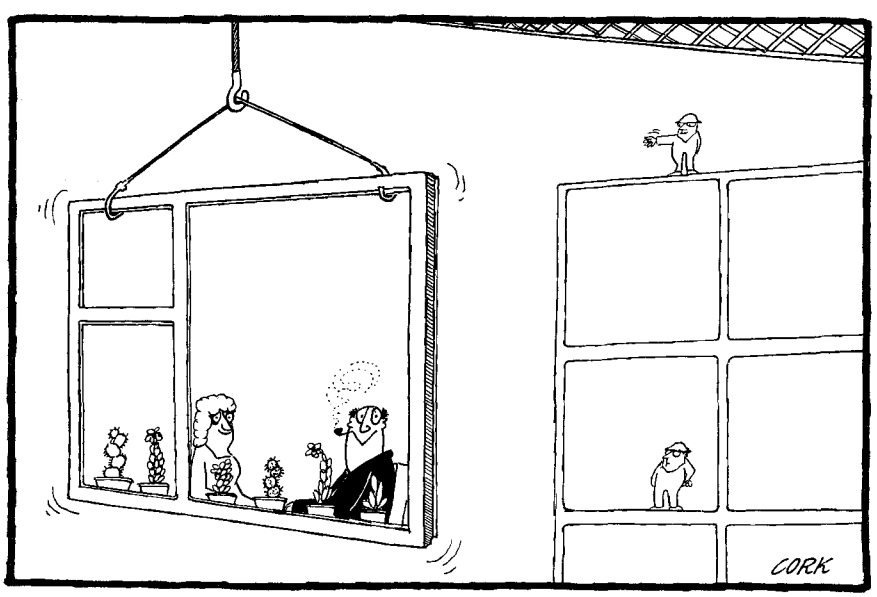
Fear of Flying, of course, is not read as a novel. With nothing else to distract, it is read as a "story", the same way people have been reading Rose Kennedy's story. But one doesn't have to give up this social relevance, and its following popularity, to write something that's really fiction. The career of Anais Nin, for example, shows that one can be the consummate literary artist—indeed, be the very symbol of it—while making statements pertinent to the feminine sensibility. Nin, of course, waited three decades for *critical* sensibilities to catch up with her work. But today readers will create the popularity for aesthetically inventive fiction. Grace Paley's collection, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974), works on both these levels. The book has a unity—most of the characters in these stories live in the same apartment house, interacting with each other and reappearing in other stories—but there is a further range which Paley's art allows. The characters speak unique languages, and what they say is less important than how they say it. One Irish mother deals with her son in immigrant theatrics, taking a kitchen knife to her breast and even drawing blood ("I guess that the heart of a middle-aged lady is jammed in deeper than an eighth of an inch, for I am here to tell the tale"); but to the reader she speaks in a revealingly lyrical voice, admitting that "It is something like I am a crazy construction worker in conversation with fresh cement."

Moving through the apartments, Paley finds other actions which make the lives of women: marriages of all sorts; infidelities not of hip young poetesses but of women in 3rd floor rears, a group of ADC mothers who meet for coffee at the playground ("When the mothers stuck them in the sandbox, they took up the whole little desert, throwing sand and screeching. A kid with a father at home, acknowledging and willing to support, couldn't get a wet toehold"). The actions themselves are imaginative, such as proposing that private school students spend a month or two attending a City public school as part of their education, "as natural and progressive an experience as a visit to the boiler room in first grade"; or in the last story, when a woman searches out her childhood apartment and moves in for several weeks with the Black family there now. One of Paley's characters is, like Jong's protagonist, a writer. But she refuses to write such stories as " 'There was a woman . . .' followed by plot, the absolute line between two points which I've always despised." Unlike Jong, her characters are better at artistic self-reflection than real-life moralizing. As one of them admits, "My vocabulary is adequate for writing notes and keeping journals but absolutely useless for an active moral life. If I really knew this language, there would surely be in my head, as there is in Webster's or the *Dictionary of American Slang*, that unreducible verb designed to tell a person like me what to do next."

For a standard by which to measure contemporary fiction, one inevitably comes back to Anais Nin. "She combines poetic lyricism with an extended fable, blurring the distinction between poetry and prose," Philip Jason says in the *Anais Nin Reader* (Swallow, 1973). Stories, no matter how "realistic", are ultimately fables, and mining all the richness of this form is Nin's great accomplishment. To get there she plumbs the subconscious, but not to chart mere deviations. Instead, as Anna Balakian says, Nin undertakes such study "better to comprehend the vistas of consciousness itself, to break the barriers of reality" as a way of capturing the essence of a woman's sex, and everything else. One can do this and still be realistically pertinent, for "The subjective vision no longer produces a hothouse plant: it is projected into the outer world, there to combine with other beings, to make the inert object unique."

Another fictionist fighting her way out of the realist stereotype is Jill Johnson Sherwin. In the stories of *The Life of Riot* (Atheneum, 1970), her women behave as richly complete human beings, not simply sexual objects or subjects. As in Paley's fiction, her concerns are sometimes violently imaginative, as when a group protesting the loss of historical landmarks wins a compromise decision, whereby "The Museum of Modern Art will be moved to a vacant lot in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and a forty-story office building with roof sauna, penny arcade and crematorium shall be erected on the cleared site." In another story a woman conducts a monologue played against her husband, who is magically yet off-handedly present in the garbage disposal, cabinets, and refrigerator. Only the author's lyricism can make scenes like these interesting; otherwise it is likely making dinner and washing the dishes would be reduced to the same banality as Erica Jong's sex. Here imagination is its own device. But having it, Sherwin can write stories otherwise out of reach, such as the situation of a young Japanese wife, just deceased, whose spirit for a time haunts her husband:

> She ran and stood in front of him, holding out the fan. He stopped and stared. He looked at it. He raised his eyes and looked all around



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her, up and down, searching for what held the fan in the air. Almost, he saw her. Then her mind splintered in a thousand parts. She saw herself scattered throughout the world, nerves and eyes, the heart, the hands, the spark of consciousness. Strained and trembling, she drew these fragments to her, forming a memory where there was no memory left, making words where there was no voice to speak them. The voice came from her hoarsely, in a fractured whisper. "No," it said. "You must hear. Part of me is in the rain that falls, in the ground that holds you, in the rice you eat. Part of me is in a boy plowing a field, miles away, your cousin. I am in your cousin. Part of me is before your eyes, every part of me, the conscious will that strains for you to see. I will never go. I cannot leave this place. This is my home."

* * *

Feminist critics have long objected to the mishandling of women characters by male authors. Mailer is not the only example: most otherwise good books of the Sixties—Updike's *Rabbit, Run*, Bellow's *Herzog*, and even the non-Portnoy works of Philip Roth—make some of their points at the expense of women characters. But as innovative fiction has taken hold in the seventies, male authors have found it less likely to write this way. Stressing the imaginative over the historical goes a long way toward preventing the abuse of anything a writer writes about, but feminine characters are the obvious winners.

The works of Donald Barthelme and Richard Brautigan are good examples. Or better yet, Ronald Sukenick's novel, *Up*, where sexuality is pushed to such imaginative limits that no one dare pull the old suspension-of-belief routine and read it as simple life. Sukenick is writing to the higher realm of our imaginations where we really live (and where sorting out fact and fantasy is impossible and irrelevant). In *Minds Meet* (New Directions, 1975) Walter Abish follows this imaginative trail back to one of its surface references. That of ludicrous paranoia:

> All evening I master forbearance. I decline to inquire into their true relationship. Why should it matter to me, a kind of stretched out weekend guest, what she and Victor do in the bathroom. It is so simple to jump to an erroneous conclusion. First Victor excuses himself, and leaves the table. Then she goes to the kitchen to fetch the dessert and coffee. Don't run off and desert me, I say jokingly. The next thing I hear is their boisterous shouts, their unabashed shrill laughter. They do nothing to restrain their mirth . . . or the sound of running water. It is seeping through from under the bathroom door when I get up to investigate. I keep myself in check and do not bring it to their attention. All things considered . . . not to overlook the soaked bedroom slippers, as well as the inexplicable presence of the two damp pillows on the toilet seat. I am at an utter loss for an explanation. Is this all being done for my exclusive benefit? I am resolved not to take too dark a view of all this horseplay.

In *Season at Coole* (Dutton, 1972) Michael Stephens shows the same ability to lyricize the actual beyond the trifling objections of surface reality. All he can say about the Coole family is that "logic had failed these people years ago," and then report their domestic insanity. The father rages, the sons battle him and the law, the daughters are stoned on hash, and the mother survives it all, drunk in the basement.

> Mother Rose plopped on the laundry she was to wash, already high and wanting to go higher, she opened the vodka bottle first, drank a good swill and washed that down with a nip from the muscatel bottle, she was talking out loud, but not loud enough for her son, the other side of the cellar partition, to hear. Her dress was akimbo past her thighs, the buttons opened at the top, her hair kinky and uncombed, her smell pungently alcoholic and lonely, whimpering, whispering, holding court with the Virgin Mary, who she often saw and spoke with, while drunk in her part of the cellar.

Stephens' virtue as a writer is seeing that beyond these facts "She is dreamless, alone, phantom-like in motherhood, a little Catholic school girl playing hooky from her holy family." Like the best women writers, Stephens brings to this feminine character a deeply aesthetic understanding. Characterizations, after all, are artifacts. As Judith Johnson Sherwin writes, "They are colors and shapes we give to clothe the disorder, the disaster that is mankind."

Writers of this capability may still publish confessional novels, but they are best judged on how the writer's art transforms the materials of a very personal life. Susan Quist's *Indecent Exposure* (Walker, 1974) succeeds just this way. "I never meant to get married," her protagonist begins. "I wanted to be famous. Actually, I wanted to be a famous writer." But school and marriage and a child intervene. Following all that are other adventures, which lead to the novel at hand—a long but very interesting trip home. Is there cause and effect, rhyme and reason to her life? "Mine was a very nice family . . . When it came time for me to go to college, my family tried to pick good schools in safe areas where there was little rape. New York was definitely out. So was California. Ideally I would have gone to a woman's college in the middle of the Middle West. But I was stubborn. I insisted on going east. I ended up in Pittsburgh. That was as far east as they would let me go."

College leads to dropping out, and that leads to marriage. The '60s pass by, until the protagonist drops out of marriage, into the counter-culture, and ends up in a poorly heated walk-up apartment in New York's East Village. "My boyfriend, who lives across the hall, has a pretty sixteen-year-old chick in his pad tonight. And he won't answer the door." She considers the pattern of her life, the plan of any confessional novel. "Do you suppose it's all because they let me go to that lousy school? I don't know."

It is this freshness, lack of inhibition, and refusal of dead seriousness that makes *Indecent Exposure* such a joyful book. That and the author's ability to avoid the dull repetition of the past. Instead she keeps us in a continual present, with a constant sense of self, carefully examining the past according to how she is now. In her novel, the protagonist makes films with the same vital sense one finds in the story itself. "It was physical, like dancing. I had to move around to get my shot. I liked the way I could be standing a block away from someone, but with the camera, I could look into his eyes like they were right in front of me. I could fill the lens, the screen, a whole wall with just a caterpillar." Only the finest fiction has this quality. Not the dull chronology of life, but rather its essence made real—this is what Susan Quist gives us in *Indecent Exposure*. She has counted all the hazards of living, and found the true perspective. "Which dangers are real?" she asks. "All of them. Or none. Probability has nothing to do with it. You can guard all, one, some, none. In the end it's all the same."

Susan Quist's novel shows not only that the confessional novel needs all the lyrical techniques of fiction, but that the best part about describing sex is using one's imagination to help do it. It also shows that one can write about such a basic concern without throwing away the advantages of art. Her novel is as socially pertinent as Jong's, plus a lot more. Women's sensibility (including sexual liberation) deserves representation in literature, just as Black consciousness deserved the same. But as Clarence Major has said, "The novel *not* deliberately aimed at bringing about human freedom . . . has liberated as many minds as has the propaganda tract, if not more." And if that's not enough, "a work that takes long root in its author's experience . . . not only makes sense anywhere in any language but also is likely either to raise hell or to lower heaven."

—*Jerome Klinkowitz*

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Lawrence Sturhahn

In Belvedere

The three hardest things about making movies on location: doing your laundry, end-slates, and keeping your mouth shut!
—A Motion Picture Litany

At the end of the street, parked solid down one side with the cars of the crew, was a *Cinemobile Mk IV*. The man in the cab, playing cards with a blond woman, was either the Teamster driver or the generator operator. Nodding to them (maybe the woman was the *genny-man*), I began to descend the long steep hill with a switch-back half-way down. Below me, brown shingled with an over-hanging porch supported by white columns, a white railing between them, a heavy electrical cable from the generator in the *Cinemobile* on top of the hill snaking along the cement in front of it, was the house.

American indeterminate in architecture (circa 1910-1940), now it's the center for these days of all this activity, its telephone either being talked on, ringing, or off the hook to prevent the ring when the crew are shooting sound. This house is standing in for a house on the North Shore of Long Island, the summer home of John Gunther, and the location for much of the film about his son's dying. Adapted as a two-hour movie for television, the title is the same as the book written by the father, a well known author in his day, "Death Be Not Proud".

Many movies I have walked in on, most of the time knowing how the film was doing, who was on it, and whether it was a happy picture. What I know about this picture is that it's having problems, that it suffers from the pressure of time (money), that it started shooting in the east, then came here, and was not well prepared. Now, inside the production, the personnel are shuffling around the hot potato of blame. As I was told, the problem is a director hung up on locations, who rejects perfectly logical choices that would be easy to shoot, that nobody in their right mind could tell the difference about.

"A tree is a tree, a rock is a rock; shoot it in Griffith Park!" That's another one of those motion picture litanies; it's always cheaper to shoot in Griffith Park.

"Death Be Not Proud"—in December—was still a week from finishing, and had an air date of February 4th. That, as it turned out, was not as pressured as another film Donald Wrye had directed. " 'Born Innocent', " he told me, "finished shooting on August eleventh and was on the air September tenth; effectively, I had ten days to cut the picture. . . ."

If you know about what has to happen to finish a movie after the principal photography is completed—that there's editing, mixing the sound, scoring and recording the music, getting an answer print, and finally making the release prints—then you know how short a month is.

Here in California, in Belvedere, they were behind schedule, it was winter, the light turned orange early, and John Gunther died a little more or a little less—depending on what scene they were shooting—every day. It was supposed to be Long Island in the summer of 1945 or 1946, and I was going down the hill to talk with Donald Wrye, the writer, producer, and director of the film.

2.

The real number of days to shoot the picture had been estimated—and it is possible to estimate quite accurately—at 23 or 24. The shooting schedule called for 19, and the director thought they'd go to 20. So I asked him what that pressure did to the director—*aesthetically?*

"Well," he said, "that means the first requirement is to sacrifice visual interest and performance. Other than that, there's no problem."

We both laughed.

Donald Wrye, whose credits include "Born Innocent", and "The Man Who Could Talk to Children" (both a special kind of motion picture made for television—more prestigious), considers himself a free-lance director, and had been persuaded to take this job while he was still on "Born Innocent".

"I thought I would, you know, come in and direct it and leave, and I didn't care for the script—which wasn't approved by the network anyway. I asked them to get another writer, and for a bunch of reasons they didn't want to do that. And I kept talking about what it should be—not defensive as the book was written.

"But there were things that interested me, mainly the three-person interactions, and the conflict between a high-achiever father and his inability to relate to his family life, the life of his son, and the intensification of this dramatic problem through the death of the boy. It seemed to me that the book had been: *Isn't Johnny Gunther, boy-genius, a wonderful person as he dies?* There was enormous guilt in his father."

Not approved—what did that mean? I asked, in search of controversy. Making deprecating motions with his hand, he explained that he meant they thought the script wasn't good enough yet to start shooting, not that the story or the subject area weren't okay.

There is all the talk of the link of violence on the screen to violence in the world outside. And if the proof isn't in, it does seem evident that children who have spent time watching the violence on television tend to be more tolerant of violence in the real world. Wrye himself had made the most controversial "Born Innocent" in which a girl is subjected to sexual assault by other girls in a shower room. What I wanted him to talk about a little bit is what the nature of television is these days.

"I have to confess that maybe I'm not the one to talk about that. The television movies I've done are special. . . ."

"Have they generally been your own ideas?"

He looked at me. "No—none of them have."

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"In other words, basically you're not . . . don't consider yourself a writer? Or, *are* you a writer? That's what I'm asking, I guess. . . ."

"I have the feeling that my ideas are not really commercial. Having had, at an early stage, a lot of my work, my scripts rejected—in my head I guess I don't have the commercial rhythm, whatever that may be, the saleable commercial rhythm. I may be getting it, and that may be a problem. But no, I haven't considered myself a writer. Then I also do a lot of sort of playing with the script as I shoot, do a lot of re-writing on the set.

"I did a couple of 'Love Stories' early on, and I rewrote both of them. There may be a dynamic of coming on a piece that gives me a kind of security because it's so badly done. And so I can go ahead and not feel that I have to stand up and take the rap for that original mistake, one way or the other. I'm not sure quite how that . . . that's a personal problem that I guess I'm getting out of because I guess I do feel, objectively, that this script is directing pretty easily. By that I mean that I'm not constantly desperate to rewrite it . . . fix it.

"I prefer the collaborative dynamic. Particularly in a medium that goes by as fast as this, because you need a sense of thoughtful self-criticism and exploration. I'm the writer-producer-director on this picture. I would rather there be a writer, a producer, and a director, so there could be an intensification of the creative tensions."

"Well, do you think that television's speed precludes that kind of careful thought, that careful working out. . . ?"

"Generally speaking, television is not a director's medium. It's a producer-writer's medium, and the director is hired so late in the process that he really does not participate in the execution of the script the way a feature director does. So—there's a whole quality of directorial contribution that is just—on balance—missing in television. Directors on *Movies of the Week* are conventionally hired two or three weeks before shooting is started. Given a script which is thought by the networks—the producers—to be ready to do, he usually doesn't have the time to develop his own ideas to any great extent, so he's left with visual invention, and some other things.

"This picture, I sometimes think, is like the final articulation of a megalomaniac, the efforts spiralling upward in the Peter Principle to a great explosion of incompetence on every level. Even if it's hard to see how that works in creative endeavor, there are a lot of people articulating it because they have the power to take over creative work. There are many creative people who shouldn't be producing, and many producers getting into creative areas they have no business in. In contemporary film and television the rule of thumb seems to be that if you can *get* to do it, you can *do* it—whether you are able or not. And I think that's unfortunate.

"Things are being done by people who don't go into real life any more—if they ever did. Some of them are young so they haven't had any experience. What they've had is the ability to function in media . . . these are people who have the chance to make films and are good at the mechanics of making films, even at the *schtick* of making films, but who have limited life experience and, thus, don't have anything to say. And, thus, however bright and skillful the films may be, they're not about anything. . . ."

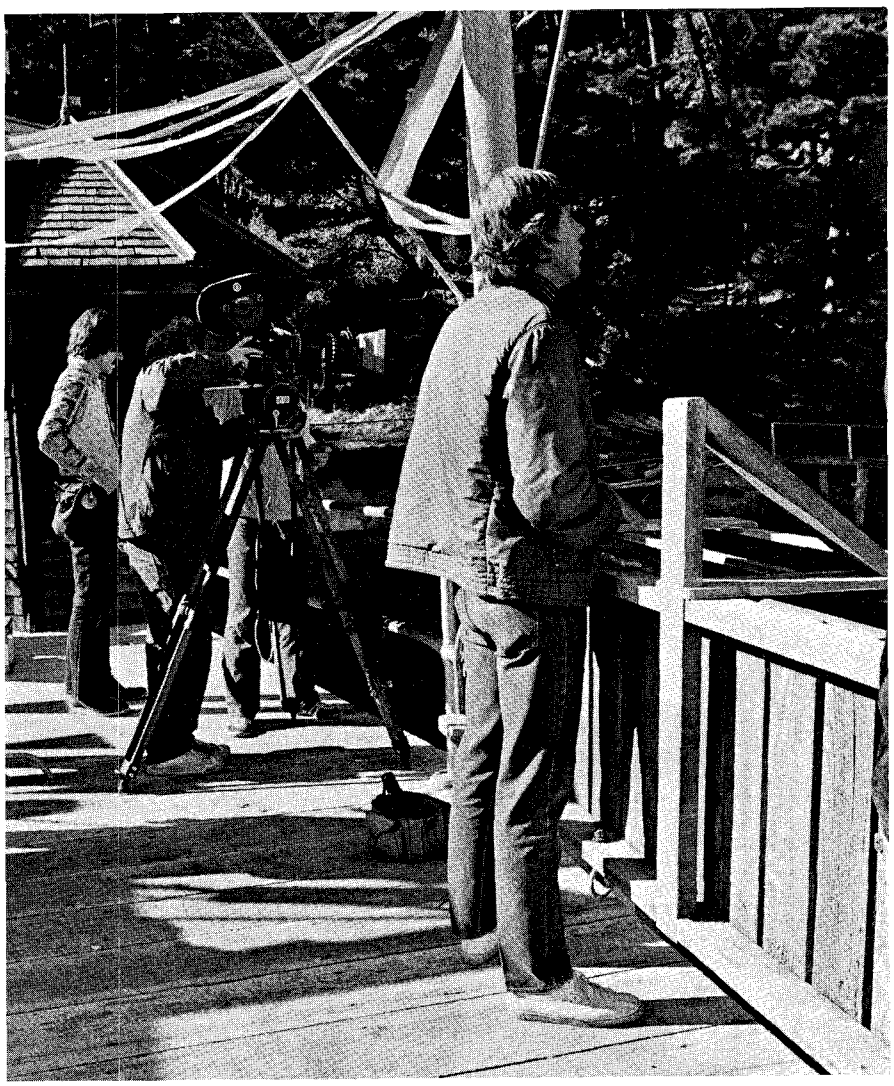
"What you're saying is that the film and television world is so inclusive that the work gets distorted, *their* real world has no correlative to *the* real world?"

"Maybe you can say that television is such a pervasive medium that it's influencing the real world. People are becoming like television."

"All right! That's a little scary."

"As I said, it seems an unfortunate sort of movement. It's my observation that a director in television movies does not function creatively in the conception of the piece. He does function in terms of the visual articulation. But, as I see it, one of my strengths is in this conceptual phase. I'm not really into camera *schtick*, the odd angles or unnecessarily complicated moves. My inclination is to try and get to the heart of what the story is trying to do, what the characters are trying to do.

"And the performance styles that I may elect probably have more to do with my exposure to real people in real situations from my years in documentary films. It's tricky to make a comparison to that, but I think I bring from it that exposure to real people in real situations, and that's opposed to that increasingly incestuous idea of what real people are *supposed* to be like.



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"Television still assumes, I think out of guilt feedback, that people are interested in ideas. That may or may not be true. Anyway, what they do then is sort of pulpize the ideas, making them more palatable by simplifying them. Frequently that results in the destruction of the ideas that were interesting enough in the first place to pursue. But still television audiences will sit still for an idea piece. The theatre audiences virtually stay away in droves from an idea piece—you know. I think this film would be hard to get made as a feature. Not because it's sentimental—practically everything that's being done is a disguised sentimentality—but this contains some idea content. It contains a quality of evaluation of life, and a valid attempt to say something more than pure entertainment.

"This is an impressive piece. 'Born Innocent' was the same way, and people were outraged at it. But I don't think it was because of the so-called rape scene—the target of the outrage. In my opinion they were outraged because the piece was unrelenting, and real. It did not offer them either the escape of melodrama (which they could comfortably hide behind as old TV bullshit), nor did it offer them the sop of everybody-gonna-be-okay happy ending. They were uncomfortable. They watched in droves, through to the end. The ratings, such as the credibility of that game is, indicated that the numbers rose.

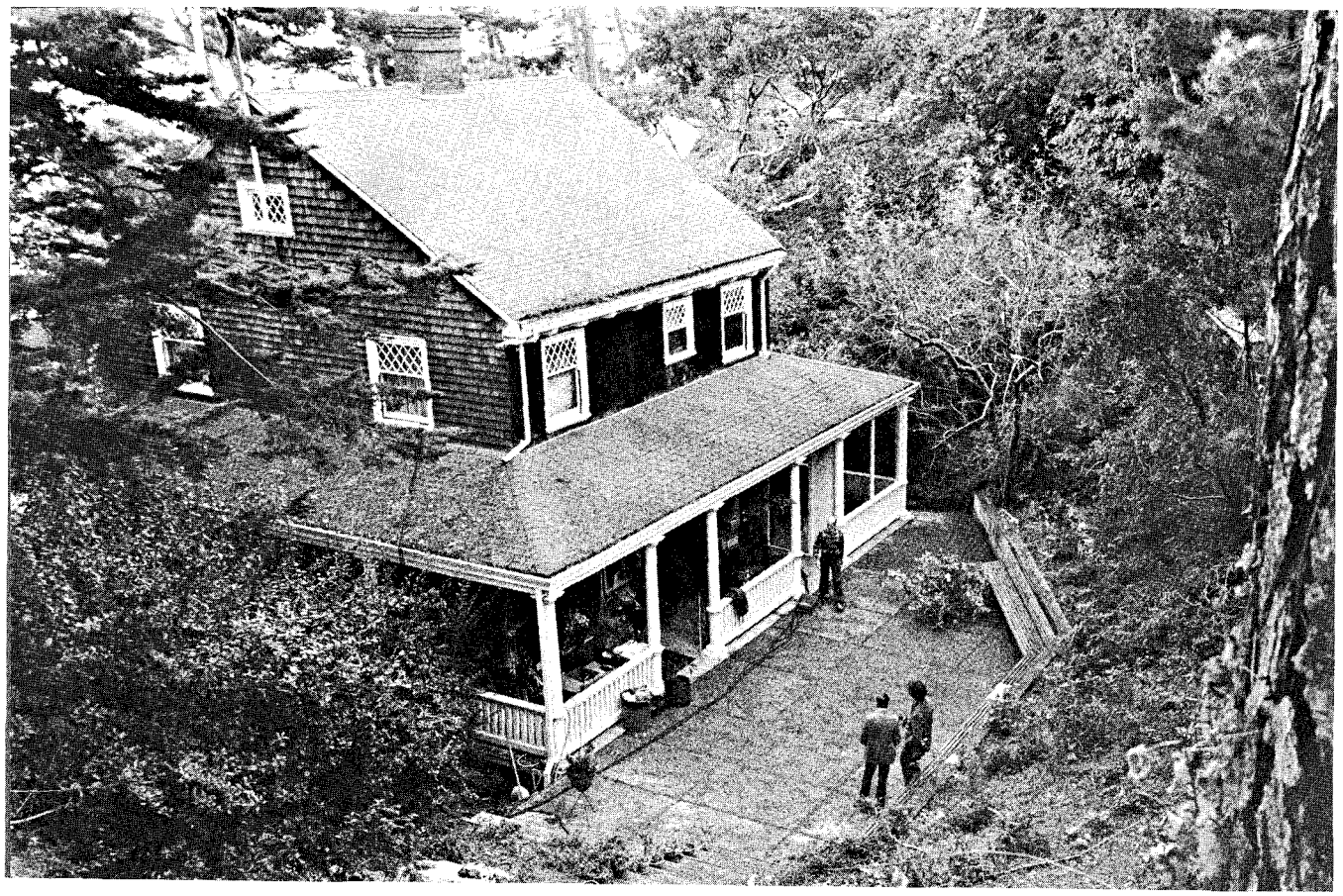
"People came into it; it gained points each half hour. NBC said the response was the most outraged of any film they have in memory. But the specific scene, the target of the outrage, the sexual assault in the shower isn't really very bad in terms of violence. In comparison with the police stories—? What it does do is not treat violence in the same way, not treat it like escapist material. I attempted to treat it as an integral part of functioning reality which is inescapable. I didn't want to leave the audience a way to escape and feel comfortable, to let them objectify the piece, and just lay back."

I said: " 'Death Be Not Proud' has an enormous amount of sentiment in it, the story of a man whose child is dying, who has the conflict of his professional life, and the guilt as he shares the suffering of his son. In the scene which I just watched you direct, it seemed that you were undercutting that sentiment with a kind of flat performance. . . ."

"You're right. The script is sentimental. Yet in terms of television it's very held back, not attacked dramatically or melodramatically as television likes to have it laid out. The network had expressed quite a bit of concern over things not being clear enough, the emotional level not high enough.

"You remember that scene that takes place at the barbecue? In it is a very key argument. Essentially the wife is accusing Gunther of using the impending death of their son in a defensive way. Also she is expressing her desire to renew their relationship, and at the same time say how she feels a greater sensitivity to the boy's true needs. But she has her own fears, the loss of love, a loss of everything. An enormously complex scene, almost all of it subtextual; those dynamics are usually never done on television. Maybe this scene is a waste of time, but it's something I wanted to do, and I play the scene with the two of them very separated, the argument not open or expressive. Under that kind of control, it only slips out, and then they pull it back with that tightly controlled WASP defensiveness. Posturing is what they're really doing, and it's very uncharacteristic of the sentimental piece and television and movies. It's a question of what is subtle in human relations, this kind of interesting and very complex situation. Also, it's a question of what an audience is really watching, what they're interested in.

"I made a documentary in the Middle West and one of the things I noticed is how regional idiosyncrasies are getting reduced, because people are taking on a sort of less satisfactory, less personally gratifying national identity. At the same time they become more powerless



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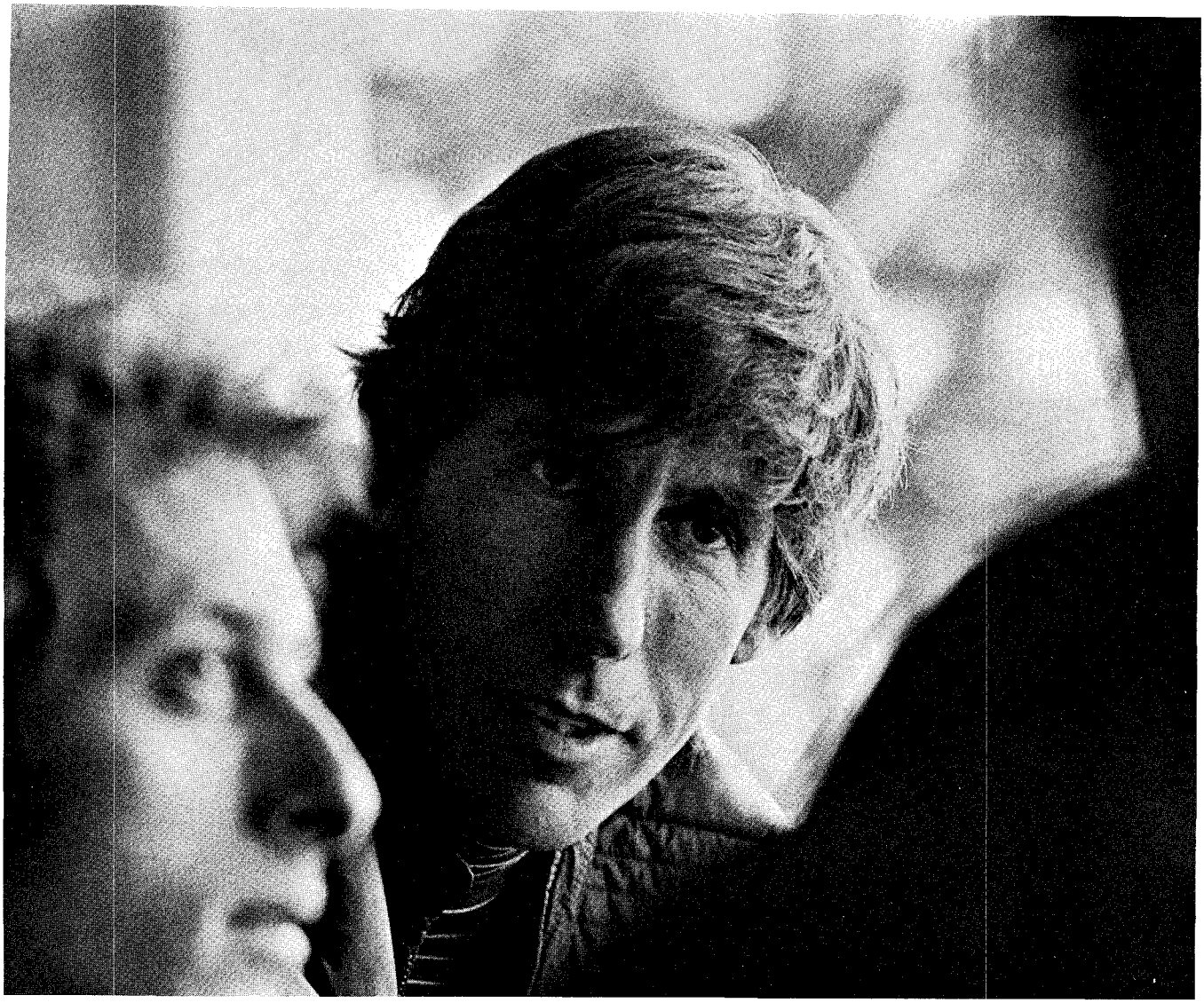

to act against that national identity because of the loss of the narrowly defined town, or neighborhood, or regional identity in which they had more direct power. Separated from a sense of interaction with social and political environment, they become estranged from who they could be in their own context. They compete against what they think they should be, and that's based on models that are absurd for them.

"The film, called 'The Numbers Start At The River', was nominated for an Academy Award in 1972. We moved from Indiana down to the Ohio, across the Ohio, up the Mississippi to Dubuque, across Iowa to Stapleton, Nebraska. I guess it was a kind of fantasy idealization, made like a documentary. It deals with a concept of life in the Midwest, which really isn't life in the Midwest. It became more the idea of life which the people there like to relate to, not what their real lives necessarily were . . . I wonder if you can really know what this country is all about without putting in some time in the Middle West?"

3.

What mystifies the crowds on a movie location that wait for hours to catch a glimpse of the stars (". . . Ooohh, there *she* is, the one standing behind the one with the red coat, that's *her*, isn't it . . . isn't it?) is how little appears to be happening. And, after these seemingly interminable waits in which distracted men and women mill around, finally there is that moment of tension in which somebody yells for quiet, and somebody else runs out in front of the camera and holds up the slate and slaps the sticks, then they keep doing that again and again and again. It must seem to the spectators that in the process of making film nobody does any work, and in the waits nothing is happening. But that, like the final product, is an illusion too.

Having been away from the process myself for some years, as I observed the shooting of "Death Be Not Proud"—the systole and diastole, the intensity of the moment when the camera rolled, the repetition of takes, those long periods of time in which the camera was moved to a new set-up and the lights were re-set, I remember how spectators scoffed at the tough life of the movie makers, who got paid for doing it, too.

Even hidden on the grounds of the Dominican College in San Rafael, California, one of the institution's buildings standing in for one of the hospitals that the boy, John Gunther, was in and out of for the last two years of his life while doctors probed, experimented, and cut at the massive brain tumor which eventually killed him, people had begun to drift in, had smelled it or seen the lights, had begun to gather to watch. They stood outside the range of brightness of the lights, watching a vintage ambulance into which a stretcher was being loaded; they were deferential and curious.

Before this set-up there had been one of those long waits because the equipment trucks had not arrived, because somebody had not organized something . . . because. . . . Good for

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me, an interval in which I was able to talk to Wrye, it was not good for the something that is ineffable in the flow of production, for the morale of the men and women who were the cast and crew.

"The reason," Wrye said, "why we came to the West Coast instead of shooting the whole picture out of New York was, in essence, a union problem and not a crew problem; the two are not necessarily the same. Crews are a very subtle dynamic. The individuals work with great interest and good effort, but the union to which they belong had created unreasonable work rules that made it uneconomical to shoot there.

"At the moment it's just an awkward situation, a split group with different work rules governing the San Francisco people and the Los Angeles people. Almost everybody from New York is on some kind of flat rate, but there have even been problems getting them to accept equivalent West Coast rates, lower as they are. To be willing to do that, I think, showed a sincere interest in the picture. From their point of view it was a great sacrifice. From my point of view the New York rates are outrageous. From the point of view of over-all efficiency, money, crew hours, it's a disaster to try to work split jurisdictions and rules.

"There's a certain inherent dynamic in the production of a picture, and to it the eight-hour work day just doesn't apply. And, of course, by the very nature of production in any twelve hour period, nobody is humping all the time, as they might be in a factory. Certain slack periods are there at one time for certain of them, and certain slack periods for others at another time. What happens is a sort of *pastiche* of different people working intensely, then resting, and working again."

"Except," I said, "for the director."

He smiled wryly. "Yes—there are certain people who have virtually no time off. Lengths of time are not relevant. What is required to prepare the next work day, and pacing one's self—that's relevant. This is my second put-it-together-fast job in a row, and the fatigue is beginning to catch up. I'm beginning to feel it in my head.

" 'Born Innocent' was a blast-through that took enormous energy. I was re-writing at night, getting on the stage during the day and working with improvisations. It was a greater strain than normal—whatever that may be. Probably there is no such thing, but if there were. . . . I think coming on this thing, getting involved in trying to pull it out, then the shift out here—the point

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I'm trying to make is that I don't think in terms of twelve hour days, but the degree of stress in an eighteen hour day, how much tolerance to apply, and for how long. . . ."

4.

I suppose the presumption on the part of the naive viewer is that the reality, or the view that is enclosed within the aspect ratio of the frame which is projected either on the screen of a theatre or on television is simply that: reality; you aim the camera and turn it on. In fact, with different focal-length lenses, an infinite choice of positions for that lens, the control of light to create brightness and shadow, there is a choice involved in what *reality* is recorded, and—subsequently—how that emotionally moves the viewer. In addition to the craft of transcribing a script to film or tape, directing or encouraging a certain performance from the actors, equally important is this point of view towards reality.

At the house in Belvedere we had discussed this, but now I wanted to pursue it at greater length. What, I wanted to know, was the influence of the documentary work—first, and then, second. . . .

"Yes to *A* and maybe to *B* and. . . ." He laughed. "Seriously, I don't see a specific world. By that I mean I don't see an objectively real world which could be commonly defined. I see an effect world in which the choice of composition, the choice of the shot, the internal dynamic within the frame, the degree you arrest the audience to make them aware that they are watching a movie—all things over which you try to impose a control—don't relate to some absolute aesthetic like the aesthetic of objective realism.

"My feeling is that there's an inevitable and very important interaction between the story and the environment within which the story takes place. Part of that environment is the frame, or what's included and excluded by it; it's not just a head talking, or two heads talking, or three heads talking. It is people in a place, people in a certain light, people in a certain mood. It becomes a kind of reciprocal thing between the place and the actor, the look or expression the audience sees. The fact that it may also supply a reality—that somebody looking at the frame says, 'Gee, that's really real—it really looks real!' is only part of it. *Real* looks like a lot of things, and it's based on the observer's mood and the acuteness of his perceptions. I can look at that wall, you know, and just not see anything. So, how do you photograph that not-seeing-anything? And, conversely, I can see great detail, which begins to mean things to me. How do you photograph that? Both times I am looking at the same thing. The terms are very awkward to me—but I don't think I have that kind of realistic view toward environment or toward individuals in the environment which is, let's say, a documentary view. The view I have is one that tries to specify the conditions that the story is about. If I want some distortion I might choose a silhouette shot as opposed to a shot where the people's faces are seen. I choose a longer lens to gain a certain kind of compression because in the scene there's a specific need for compression. And these kinds of choices are all distortions of reality for the sake of a defined dramatic expression."

"So Part *C* of the question doesn't apply. I was going to ask about actors and performance, but now it depends on just how the person fits—whatever their work method is and however they get to that scene, it's their business—as long as they get there. . ."

"I think my method is that I don't have a method for that. I think I would probably say that I talk to people, and try to relate to them my insights about the scene. I want to use their insights, and amplify their individualities, and use their personalities. I want to go with them, not against them. Finally, I suppose, there is the monitoring of the actor's performance. How is he to know when he's really good? What he can know is that it feels good, but he can't really know how it looked. So he's relying on you to advise him.

"In my case I obviously have a very precise notion of who this set of people are, and how they should interact. And when I come down to the casting, and then getting the picture shot, I try to keep in mind what the original conceptions were. In the case of an actor, it's the fact of that actor's personality as well as his craft. With the location, it's the fact of that location as well as what is possible to do in terms of manipulating it. The location selections then become very important for me. In a way, it's a casting all its own. On this film the location selections have all been great compromises for me, but I have had to accept them as practicable, and they're not going to look like compromises. For me it is simply the distance between where I start and where I end up." □

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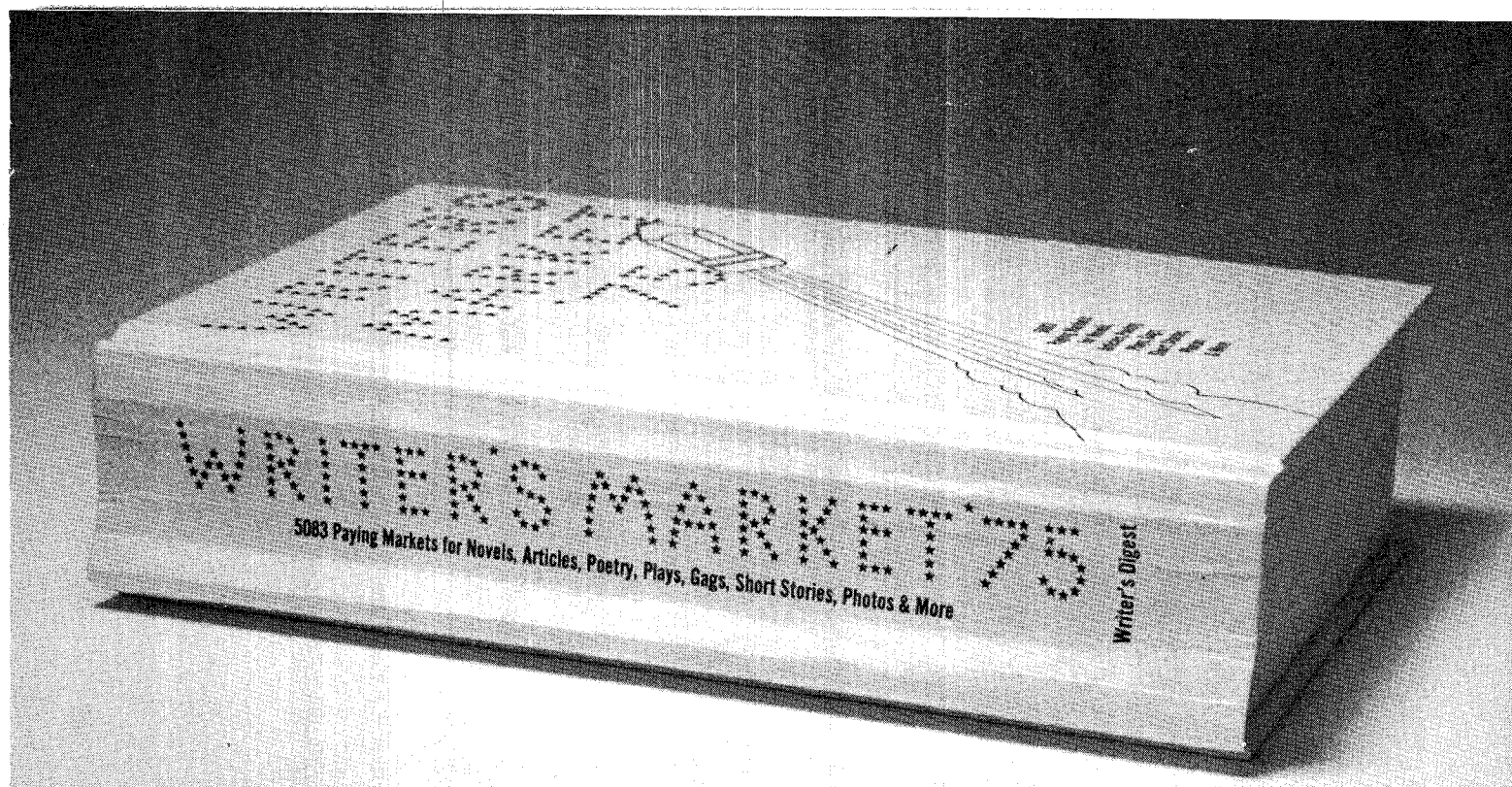

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